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A N  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
Corruptions of Christianity,  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

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B Y  
Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F. R. S.

THE THIRD EDITION.

Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?—Whence  
then hath it tares?—*Matt. xiii. 27.*

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VOL. I.

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B O S T O N:  
PRINTED BY WILLIAM SPOTSWOOD.

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TO THE

*Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, A. M.*

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DEAR FRIEND,

WISHING, as I do, that my name may ever be connected as closely with yours after death, as we have been connected by friendship in life, it is with peculiar satisfaction that I dedicate this work (which I am willing to hope will be one of the most useful of my publications) to you.

To your example of a pure love of truth, and of the most fearless integrity in asserting it, evidenced by the sacrifices you have made to it, I owe much of my own wishes to imbibe the same spirit; though a more favourable education, and situation in life, by not giving me an opportunity of distinguishing myself as you have done, has, likewise, not exposed me to the temptation of acting otherwise; and for this I wish to be truly thankful. For since so very few of those who profess the same sentiments with you, have had the courage to act consistently with them, no person, whatever he may *imagine* he might have been equal to, can have a right to presume, that he would have been one of so small a number.

No person can see in a stronger light than you do the mischievous consequences of the corruptions of that religion which you justly prize, as the most valuable of the gifts of God to man; and therefore I flatter myself, it will give you some pleasure to accompany me in my researches into the origin and progress of them, as this will tend to give all the friends of pure christianity the fullest satisfaction that they reflect no discredit on the revelation itself; since it will be seen that they all came in from a foreign and hostile quarter. It will likewise afford a pleasing presage, that our religion will, in due time, purge itself of every thing that debases it, and that for the present prevents its reception by those who are ignorant of its nature, whether living in christian countries, or among Mahometans and Heathens.

The gross darkness of that *night* which has for many



centuries obscured our holy religion, we may clearly see, is past; the *morning* is opening upon us; and we cannot doubt but that the light will increase, and extend itself more and more, unto *the perfect day*. Happy are they who contribute to diffuse the pure light of this *everlasting gospel*. The time is coming when the detection of one error, or prejudice, relating to this most important subject, and the success we have in opening and enlarging the minds of men with respect to it, will be considered as far more honourable than any discovery we can make in other branches of knowledge, or our success in propagating them.

In looking back upon the dismal scene which the shocking corruptions of christianity exhibit, we may well exclaim with the prophet, *How is the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed*. But the thorough examination of every thing relating to christianity, which has been produced by the corrupt state of it, and which nothing else would probably have led to, has been as *the refiner's fire* with respect to it; and when it shall have stood this test, it may be presumed that the truth and excellency of it will never more be called in question.

This corrupt state of christianity has, no doubt, been permitted by the Supreme Governor of the world for the best of purposes, and it is the same great Being who is also now, in the course of his providence, employing these means to *purge his floor*. The civil powers of this world, which were formerly the chief supports of the antichristian systems, who have *given their power and strength unto the beast* (Rev. xvii. 13.) now begin to *hate her*, and are ready to *make her desolate and naked*, v. 16. To answer their own political purposes, they are now promoting various reformatations in the church; and it can hardly be doubted, but that the difficulties in which many of the European nations are now involving themselves, will make other measures of reformation highly expedient and necessary.

Also, while the attention of men in power is ingrossed by the difficulties that more immediately press upon them, the endeavours of the friends of reformation in points of *doctrine* pass with less notice, and operate without obstruction. Let us rejoice in the *good* that results from this *evil*, and omit no opportunity that is furnished us, voluntarily to co-operate with the gracious intention of divine providence; and let us make that our primary object, which others are doing to promote their own sinister ends. All those who



## DEDICATION.

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labour in the discovery and communication of truth, if they be actuated by a pure love of it, and a sense of its importance to the happiness of mankind, may consider themselves *as workers together with God*, and may proceed with confidence, assured that *their labour* in this cause *shall not be in vain*, whether they themselves see the fruit of it or not.

The more opposition we meet with in these labours, the more honourable it will be to us, provided we meet that opposition with the true spirit of christianity. And to assist us in this, we should frequently reflect that many of our opponents are probably men who wish as well to the gospel as we do ourselves, and really think *they do God service* by opposing us. Even prejudice and bigotry, arising from such a principle, are respectable things, and entitled to the greatest candour. If our religion teaches us to *love our enemies*, certainly we should love, and, from a principle of love, should endeavour to convince those, who, if they were only better informed, would embrace us as friends.

The time will come, when the cloud, which for the present prevents our distinguishing our friends and our foes, will be dispersed, even that day in which *the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed* to the view of all. In the mean time, let us think as favourably as possible of all men, our particular opponents not excepted; and therefore be careful to conduct all *hostility*, with the pleasing prospect that one day it will give place to the most perfect *amity*.

You, my friend, peculiarly happy in a most placid, as well as a most determined mind, have nothing to blame yourself for in this respect. If, on any occasion, I have indulged too much asperity, I hope I shall, by your example, learn to correct myself, and without abating my zeal in the common cause.

As we are now both of us past the meridian of life, I hope we shall be looking more and more beyond it, and be preparing for that world, where we shall have no errors to combat, and consequently where *a talent for disputation* will be of no use; but where the *spirit of love* will find abundant exercise; where all our labours will be of the most friendly and benevolent nature, and where our employment will be its own reward.

Let these views brighten the evening of our lives, that *evening*, which will be enjoyed with more satisfaction, in proportion as the *day* shall have been laboriously and well



spent. Let us then, without reluctance, submit to that temporary rest in the grave, which our wise Creator has thought proper to appoint for all the human race, our Saviour himself not wholly excepted; anticipating with joy the glorious *morning of the resurrection*, when we shall meet that Saviour whose precepts we have obeyed, whose spirit we have breathed, whose religion we have defended, whose *cup* also we may, in some measure, have drank of, and whose honours we have asserted, without making them to interfere with those of *his father and our father, of his God and our God*, that supreme, that great and awful Being, to whose will he was always most perfectly submissive, and for whose unrivalled prerogative he always shewed the most ardent zeal.

With the truest affection,

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your Brother,

In the faith and hope of the gospel,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, Nov. 1782.

## THE PREFACE.

AFTER examining the foundation of our christian faith, and having seen how much valuable information we receive from it, in my *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, it is with a kind of reluctance, that, according to my proposal, I must now proceed to exhibit a view of the dreadful corruptions which have debased its spirit, and almost annihilated all the happy effects which it was eminently calculated to produce. It is some satisfaction to us, however, and is more than sufficient to answer any objection that may be made to christianity itself from the consideration of these corruptions, that they appear to have been clearly foreseen by Christ, and by several of the apostles. And we have at this day the still greater satisfaction, to perceive that, according to the predictions contained in the books of scrip-



ture, christianity has begun to recover itself from this corrupted state, and that the reformation advances apace. And though some of the most shocking abuses still continue in many places, their virulence is very generally abated; and the number is greatly increased of those who are most zealous in the profession of christianity, whose lives are the greatest ornament to it, and who hold it in so much purity, that, if it was fairly exhibited, and universally understood, it could hardly fail to recommend itself to the acceptance of the whole world, of Jews and Gentiles.

The clear and full exhibition of truly *reformed christianity* seems now to be almost the only thing that is wanting to the universal prevalence of it. But so long as all the christianity that is known to Heathens, Mahometans, and Jews, is of a corrupted and debased kind; and particularly while the profession of it is so much connected with *worldly interest*, it is no wonder that mankind in general refuse to admit it, and that they can even hardly be prevailed upon to give any attention to the evidence that is alleged in its favour. Whereas, when the system itself shall appear to be less liable to objection, it is to be hoped, that they may be brought to give proper attention to it, and to the evidence on which it rests.

Disagreeable as must be the view of these corruptions of christianity, to those who love and value it, it may not be without its use, even with respect to themselves. For the more their abhorrence and indignation are excited by the consideration of what has so long passed for christianity, the more highly will they esteem what is truly so; the contrast will be so striking, and so greatly in its favour. Both these valuable ends, I hope, will be, in some measure, answered by this attempt, to exhibit what appear to me to have been the great deviations from the genuine system and spirit of christianity, and the causes that produced them.

The following work has been so long promised to the public, that I cannot help being apprehensive lest my friends, and others, should not find their expectations from it fully answered. But they should recollect, that it was originally promised on a much smaller scale, viz. as the concluding part of my *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, which were drawn up for the use of young persons only.

I have since seen reason to extend my views, and to make this a separate work, larger than the whole of the *Institutes*; and perhaps I may not have succeeded sufficiently well in



the uniform extension of the whole design. If, therefore, in any respect, either the composition, or the citation of authorities, should appear to be more adapted to my first design, I hope the candid reader will make allowance for it.

If my proper and ultimate object be considered, I flatter myself it will be thought that I have given reasonable satisfaction with respect to it; having shewn that every thing which I deem to be a *corruption of christianity* has been a departure from the original scheme, or an *innovation*. It will also be seen, that I have generally been able to trace every such corruption to its proper source, and to shew what circumstances in the state of things, and especially of other prevailing opinions and prejudices, made the alteration, in doctrine or practice, sufficiently natural, and the introduction and establishment of it easy. And if I have succeeded in this investigation, this *historical method* will be found to be one of the most satisfactory modes of argumentation, in order to prove that what I object to is really a corruption of genuine christianity, and no part of the original scheme. For after the clearest refutation of any particular doctrine, that has been long established in christian churches, it will be asked, how, if it be no part of the scheme, it ever came to be thought so, and to be so generally acquiesced in; and in many cases the mind will not be perfectly satisfied till such questions be answered.

Besides this, I have generally given a short account of the recovery of the genuine doctrines of christianity in the last age, though this was not my professed object; and a full *history of the reformation*, in all its articles, might be the subject of another large and very instructive work, though I apprehend not quite so useful as I flatter myself this will be.

I have not, however, taken notice of every departure from the original standard of christian faith or practice, but only or at least chiefly, such as subsist at this day, in some considerable part of the christian world; or such as, though they may not properly subsist themselves, have left considerable vestiges in some christian churches. I have not omitted at the same time, to recite, as far as I was able, both the several steps by which each corruption has advanced, and also whatever has been urged with the greatest plausibility in favour of it; though I have made a point of being as succinct as possible in the detail of *arguments*, for or against any particular article of faith or practice.

In one article, however, I have considerably extended the



argumentative part, viz. in my account of the doctrine of *atonement*. To this subject I had given particular attention many years ago, and Dr. Lardner and Dr. Fleming having seen what I then wrote, prevailed upon me to allow them to publish what they thought proper of it. This they did under the title of *The Scripture Doctrine of Remission*, in the year 1761. When I published the *Theological Repository* I corrected and enlarged that tract, and intended to write a still larger treatise on the subject, with the *history* of the doctrine annexed to it. I shall now, however, drop that design, contenting myself with giving the substance of the arguments in this work.

In the *Conclusion* of this work, I have taken the liberty, which I hope will not be thought improper, to endeavour to call the attention of *unbelievers* to the subject of the corruptions of christianity (being sensible that this is one of the principal causes of infidelity) and also that of those who have influence with respect to the present *establishments* of christianity; the reformation of many of the abuses I have described, being very much in their power.

There is nothing, I hope, in the *manner* of these addresses that will give offence, as none was intended. I trust, that from a sense of its infinite importance, I am deeply concerned for the honour of the religion I profess. I would, therefore, willingly do any thing that may be in my power (and I hope with a temper not unbecoming the gospel) to make it both properly *understood*, and also completely *reformed*, in order to its more general propagation, and to its producing its proper effects on the hearts and lives of men; and consequently, to its more speedily becoming, what it is destined to be, the greatest blessing to all the nations of the world.

As this work was originally intended to be nothing more than a fourth part of my *Institutes*, as mentioned above, I had contented myself with taking authorities from respectable modern writers, such as Dr. Clarke, Lardner, Jortin, Basnage, Beaufobre, Le Clerc, Grotius, Dupin, Fleury, Mosheim, Le Sueur, Giannone, &c. As my views extended, and I was led to imagine my work might be of some use to a higher class of readers, I found it necessary to have recourse to the original authorities in every thing of consequence, especially for such articles as might be liable to be controverted in this country.

Accordingly, I have taken a good deal of pains to read, or at least look carefully through, many of the most capital



works of the ancient christian writers, in order to form a just idea of their general principles, and turn of thinking, and to collect such passages as might occur for my purpose. Still, however, some things remain as I first wrote them, and sometimes from not having been able to purchase, or conveniently procure, the original writers.

But my object is not to give my readers a high idea of the extent of my reading, but simply a *credible account* of such facts as I shall lay before them; and I doubt not they will be as well satisfied of the fidelity of such writers as I have quoted, as they would have been of my own. I can truly say that I have admitted nothing, the authority for which I think to be at all suspicious; and it will be seen that I have generally made use of such as, from the nature of the subject, are the least liable to exception. Where no writer is quoted, I suppose the fact to be well known to all who are conversant in these enquiries, and for which the common ecclesiastical historians are a sufficient authority.

To have compiled such a work as this from original authorities only, without making use of any modern writers, would have been more than any one man could have executed in the course of a long life. And what advantage do we derive from the labours of others, if we can never confide in them, and occasionally save ourselves some trouble by their means?

It will also be proper to observe, that I have sometimes made use of my own former publications, especially those in the *Theological Repository*, which, indeed, were originally intended for farther use. Thus I have partly copied, and partly abridged, what I had there written on the subject of *Atonement*, as mentioned before, and also on that of *Baptism*. Some things too will be found in this work copied, or abridged, from other works that bear my name, as the *Essay on the Lord's Supper*, on *Church Discipline*, and the *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirits*. But the whole of such extracts will not much exceed a single sheet; and I did not think it right to leave any of the pieces imperfect merely to avoid a repetition of so small a magnitude, especially considering that the several publications may fall into different hands.

Since, however, I have written so largely on the subject of the *soul*, and the history of opinions relating to it in the *Disquisitions*, I have omitted it altogether in this work, though it would have been a very proper part of it. I have



only taken from that work some particulars relating to the *state of the dead*, and a few other articles, without which this work would have been strikingly defective.

The whole of what I have called the *Sequel to the Disquisitions* (or the *History of the Philosophical Doctrine concerning the Origin of the Soul, and the Nature of Matter, with its Influence on Christianity, especially with respect to the Doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ*) I wish to have considered as coming properly within the plan of this work, and essential to the principal object of it. Indeed, when I published the *Disquisitions* I hesitated whether I should publish that part then, or reserve it for this *History*. But the rest of this work was not then ready, and it was of too much use for the purpose of the other, not to go along with it. I wish the *general arguments against the pre-existence of Christ*, contained in Sect. VI. of that Sequel to be particularly attended to.

In a subject so copious as this, I am far from supposing it probable that I have made no mistakes, notwithstanding I have used all the care and precaution that I could. If any such be pointed out to me, whether it be by a friend or an enemy, I shall be glad to avail myself of the intimation, in case there should be a demand for a second edition. As some of my materials bear an equal relation to several of the subjects into which the work is divided, the reader will find a repetition of some things, but they are so few, and so useful in their respective places, that it hardly requires an apology. As to the repetition in the Appendix, the importance of the subject must apologize for it.

Though I have made no formal division of this work except into separate *Parts* and *Sections*, the reader will perceive that I have in the first place considered the most important articles of christian *doctrine*, and then those that relate to *discipline*, and the *government of the church*.

As there are different editions of many of the authors that I have quoted, I shall here give a catalogue of the principal of them.

## FOLIO.

Divi Gregorii Papæ Opera	-	-	-	Paris 1551
Justini Martyris Apologia cum notis Thirlby	-	-	-	London 1722
Arnobius Adversus Gentes, per Elmenhorstium	-	-	-	Hamb. 1610
Joannis Damasceni Opera, per J. Billium	-	-	-	Paris 1619
Anselmi Opera, per Picardum	-	-	-	Col. Agrip. 1612
Bernardi Opera, per Picardum	-	-	-	Paris 1609
Athanasii Opera, Gr. Lat. 2 vols.	-	-	-	Paris 1627
Thomæ Aquinatis Summa	-	-	-	Paris 1631



Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera	- - - - -	Paris 1630
Epiphanii Opera, 2 vols.	- - - - -	Coloniæ 1682
Augustini Opera, 10 vols.	- - - - -	Basil. 1569
Hieronymi Opera, 9 vols.	- - - - -	Paris 1623
Chrysostomi Opera, 10 vols. per Fronto Ducaum et Commelinum	- - - - -	Paris 1621
Basilii Opera, 3 vols.	- - - - -	Paris 1638
Hilarii Opera	- - - - -	Paris 1652
Tatiani. Oratio contra Græcos, Gr. et Lat. at the end of Justin Martyr's works	- - - - -	Coloniæ 1686
Origenis Opera (Latine) 2 vols.	- - - - -	Basil. 1571
Irenæi Opera, per Grabe	- - - - -	Oxon. 1702
Cyrilli Hierosolymitani Opera, per Milles	- - - - -	Oxon. 1703
Cypriani Opera	- - - - -	Oxon. 1682
Tertulliani Opera, per Rigaltium	- - - - -	Paris 1675
Optati Opera, per G. Albalpinæum	- - - - -	Paris 1676
Eusebii, Socratis, Sozomeni, Theodoriti Hist. eccles. 3 vols. per Reading	- - - - -	Cant. 1720
Dupin's History of ecclesiastical writers, 13 vols.	- - - - -	London 1696
Grotius de satisfactione, in his Works, vol. 4th.	- - - - -	London 1679
Q U A R T O.		
Origenes contra Celsum	- - - - -	Cantab. 1677
Syntagma Confessionum Fidei	- - - - -	Geneva. 1654
O C T A V O.		
Lanctantii Opera	- - - - -	Lug. Bat. 1660
— Epitome, per Davis	- - - - -	Cantab. 1718
Petri Lombardi Sententiæ	- - - - -	Moguntia 1632
Novatiani Opera, per Welchman	- - - - -	Oxon. 1724
D U O D E C I M O, &c.		
Athenagoræ Opera, per Richenbergium	- - - - -	Leips. 1685
Theophilus ad Autolycum, 12mo.	- - - - -	Oxon. 1684
Anecdotes Ecclesiastiques (extracted from Giannone's History of Naples) 12mo.	- - - - -	Amsterd. 1738

Whenever I have quoted *Beausobre*, without mentioning any particular work, it is his *Histoire de Manicheisme*, 2 vols. 4to. 1734; and *Basnage*, quoted in the same manner, is his *Histoire de la Religion des Eglises Reformées*, 2 vols. 4to. 1725. In like manner, *Anecdotes*, in the references always means *Anecdotes Ecclesiastiques*, which is extracted from Giannone's History of Naples, a work of the highest authority. When only the words *Sueur* or *Fleury* occur in the references, the places will always be found under the year mentioned in the text.

With respect to the other works I have quoted, no mistake of the edition can well be made, and with respect to all ancient writers, I have almost always quoted the *Book* and *Chapter*, &c. as well as the *Page*.

As I have quoted *Fleury's Discourses on Ecclesiastical History*, it will be proper to observe that my edition of his history is that of Brussels, in 33 vols. 12mo. and that these Discourses are prefixed to the following volumes viz. the 8th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th.



THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
Corruptions of Christianity.

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PART I.

*The History of Opinions relating to Jesus Christ.*

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THE INTRODUCTION.

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THE *Unity of God* is a doctrine on which the greatest stress is laid in the whole system of revelation. To guard this most important article was the principal object of the Jewish religion; and, notwithstanding the proneness of the Jews to idolatry, at length it fully answered its purpose, in reclaiming them, and in impressing the minds of many persons of other nations in favour of the same fundamental truth.

The Jews were taught by their prophets to expect a Messiah, who was to be descended from the tribe of Judah, and the family of David, a person in whom themselves and all the nations of the earth should be blessed; but none of their prophets gave them an idea of any other than a man like themselves, in that illustrious character; and no other did they ever expect, or do they expect to this day.

Jesus Christ, whose history answers to the description given of the Messiah by the prophets, made no other pretensions; referring all his extraordinary



power to God, his father, who, he expressly says, spake and acted by him, and who raised him from the dead ; and it is most evident that the apostles, and all those who conversed with our Lord, before and after his resurrection, considered him in no other light than simply as *a man approved of God, by signs and wonders which God did by him.* Acts ii. 22.

Not only do we find no trace of so prodigious a change in the ideas which the apostles entertained concerning Christ, as from that of *a man like themselves* (which it must be acknowledged were the first that they entertained) to that of *the most high God*, or one who was, in any sense, their *maker* or *preserver*, that when their minds were most fully enlightened, after the descent of the holy spirit, and to the latest period of their ministry, they continued to speak of him in the same style ; even when it is evident they must have intended to speak of him in a manner suited to his state of greatest exaltation and glory. Peter uses the simple language above quoted, of *a man approved of God* immediately after the descent of the spirit, and the apostle Paul, giving what may be called the christian creed says, 1 Tim. ii. 5, *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* He does not say the *God* ; the *God man*, or the *superangelic being*, but simply *the man Christ Jesus* ; and nothing can be alleged from the New Testament in favour of any higher nature of Christ, except a few passages interpreted without any regard to the context, or the modes of speech and opinions of the times in which the books were written, and in such a manner in other respects, as would authorize our proving any doctrine whatever from them.

From this plain doctrine of the scriptures, a doctrine so consonant to reason and the ancient prophecies, christians have at length come to believe what they do not pretend to have any conception of, and than which it is not possible to frame a more express contradiction. For while they consider Christ as the supreme eternal God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, they moreover acknowledge the Father and the Holy Spirit to be



equally God, in the same exalted sense, all three equal in power and glory, and yet all three constituting no more than one God.

To a person the least interested in the inquiry, it must appear an object of curiosity to trace by what means, and by what steps, so great a change has taken place, and what circumstances in the history of other opinions, and of the world, proved favourable to the successive changes. An opinion, and especially an opinion adopted by great numbers of mankind, is to be considered as any other *fact in history*; for it cannot be produced without an *adequate cause*, and is therefore a proper object of philosophical inquiry. In this case I think it not difficult to find causes abundantly adequate to the purpose, and it is happily in our power to trace almost every step by which the changes have been successively brought about.

If the interest that mankind have generally taken in any thing will at all contribute to interest us in the inquiry concerning it, this history cannot fail to engage our attention. For perhaps in no business whatever have the minds of men been more agitated; and *speculative* as the nature of the thing is, in few cases has the peace of society been so much disturbed. To this very day, of such importance is the subject considered by thousands and ten thousands, that they cannot write or speak of it without the greatest emotion, and without treating their opponents with the greatest rancour. If good sense and humanity did not interpose to mitigate the rigour of law, thousands would be sacrificed to the cause of orthodoxy in this single article; and the greatest number of sufferers would probably be in this very country, on account of the greater freedom of inquiry which prevails here, in consequence of which we entertain and profess the greatest diversity of opinions.

The various steps in this interesting history it is now my business to point out, and I wish that all my readers may attend me with as much coolness and impartiality as I trust I shall myself preserve through the whole of this investigation.



## SECTION I.

*Of the Opinion of the ancient Jewish and Gentile Churches.*

THAT the ancient Jewish church must have held the opinion that Christ was simply a *man*, and not either *God Almighty*, or a *super-angelic being*, may be concluded from its being the clear doctrine of the scripture, and from the apostles having taught no other; but there is sufficient evidence of the same thing from ecclesiastical history. It is unfortunate, indeed, that there are now extant so few remains of any of the writers who immediately succeeded the apostles, and especially that we have only a few inconsiderable fragments of Hegesippus, a Jewish christian, who wrote the history of the church in continuation of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and who travelled to Rome about the year 160; but it is not difficult to collect evidence enough in support of my assertion.

The members of the Jewish church were, in general, in very low circumstances, which may account for their having few persons of learning among them; on which account they were much despised by the richer and more learned gentile christians, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, before which event all the christians in Judea (warned by our Saviour's prophecies concerning the desolation of that country) had retired to the north east of the sea of Galilee. They were likewise despised by the gentiles for their bigotted adherence to the law of Moses, to the rite of circumcision, and other ceremonies of their ancient religion. And on all these accounts they probably got the name of *Ebionites*, which signifies *poor* and *mean*, in the same manner as many of the early reformers from popery got the name of *Beghards*, and other appellations of a similar nature. The fate of these ancient Jewish christians was, indeed, peculiarly hard. For, besides the neglect of the gentile christians, they were,



as Epiphanius informs us\*, held in the greatest abhorrence by the Jews from whom they had separated, and who cursed them in a solemn manner three times, whenever they met for public worship.

In general, these ancient Jewish christians retained the appellation of Nazarenes, and, it may be inferred from Origen, Epiphanius, and Eusebius, that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same people, and held the same tenets, though some of them supposed that Christ was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, while others of them held that he had no natural father, but had a miraculous birth†. Epiphanius, in his account of the Nazarenes (and the Jewish christians never went by any other name) makes no mention of any of them believing the divinity of Christ, in any sense of the word.

It is particularly remarkable that Hegesippus, in giving an account of the heresies of his time, though he mentions the Carpocratians, Valentinians, and others who were generally termed Gnostics (and who held that Christ had a pre-existence, and was man only in appearance) not only makes no mention of this supposed heresy of the Nazarenes or Ebionites, but says that, in his travels to Rome, where he spent some time with Anicetus, and visited the bishops of other sees, he found that they all held the same doctrine, that was taught in the law, by the prophets, and by our Lord‡. What could this be but the proper unitarian doctrine, held by the Jews, and which he himself had been taught, though he had, no doubt, a particular view to the tenets of the Gnostics which appeared in the earliest age, and which were strongly reprobated by the apostles and their followers?

That Eusebius doth not give this account of the primitive christian faith, is no wonder, considering his prejudice against the unitarians of his own time. He speaks of the Ebionites, as persons whom a malignant dæmon had brought into his power§, and though he speaks of them as holding that Jesus was the

\* Hær. 29. Opera, vol. i. p. 124.

† Ibid. p. 125. ‡ Eusebii. Hist. L. iv. C. xxii. p. 182.

§ Ib. L. iii. C. xxvii. p. 121.



son of Joseph, as well as of Mary, he speaks with no less virulence of the opinion of those of his time, who believed the miraculous conception, calling their heresy *madness*. Valesius, the translator of Eusebius, was of opinion that the history of Hegesippus was neglected and lost by the ancients, on account of the errors it contained, and these errors could be no other than the unitarian doctrine. It is possible also, that it might be less esteemed on account of the very plain unadorned style, in which all the ancients say it was written.

Almost all the ancient writers who speak of what they call the heretics of the two first centuries, say that they were of *two kinds*, the first those who thought that Christ was a man only in appearance, and the other that he was a mere man †. Tertullian calls the former *Docetæ*, and the latter *Ebionites*. Austin speaking of the same two sects, says, that the former believed Christ to be God, but denied that he was man, whereas the latter believed him to be man, but denied that he was God. Of this latter opinion Austin owns that he himself was, till he became acquainted with the writings of Plato, which in his time were translated into Latin, and in which he learned the doctrine of the *Logos*.

Now that this second heresy, as the later writers called it, was really no heresy at all, but the plain simple truth of the gospel, may be clearly inferred from the apostle John taking no notice at all of it, though he censures the former, who believed Christ to be a man only in appearance, in the severest manner. And that this was the only heresy that gave him any alarm, is evident from his first epistle chap. iv. 3. where he says that *every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh* (by which he must have meant, in opposition to the Gnostics, *is truly a man*) *is of God*. On the other hand, he says, *every spirit which confesses not that Jesus Christ is come of the flesh, is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world*. For this was the first cor-

† Lardner's Hist. of Heretics, p. 17.



ruption of the christian religion by the maxims of heathen philosophy, and which proceeded afterwards till christianity was brought to a state little better than paganism.

That christian writers in later times should imagine that this apostle alluded to the unitarian heresy, or that of the Ebionites, in the introduction to his gospel, is not to be wondered at; as nothing is more common than for men to interpret the writings of others according to their own previous ideas and conceptions of things. On the contrary, it seems very evident that, in that introduction, the apostle alludes to the very same system of opinions which he had censured in his epistle, the fundamental principle of which was, that, not the supreme Being himself, but an emanation from him, to which some gave the name of *Logos*, was the maker of all things; whereas he there affirms that the *Logos* by which all things were made, was not a being distinct from God, but God himself, that is, an attribute of God, or the divine power and wisdom. The unitarians of the third century charged the orthodox with introducing a new and strange interpretation of the word *Logos* by supposing it to mean Christ\*.

That very system, indeed, which made Christ to have been the *eternal reason*, or *Logos* of the Father, did not, probably, exist in the time of the apostle John; but was introduced from the principles of platonism afterwards. But the Valentinians, who were only a branch of the Gnostics, made great use of the same term, not only denominating by it one of the æons in the system described by Irenæus, but also one of them that was endowed by all the other æons with some extraordinary gift, to which person they gave the name of *Jesus, Saviour, Christ*, and *Logos* †.

The word *Logos* was also frequently used by them as synonymous to *æon*, in general, or an intelligence that sprung, mediately or immediately, from the divine essence ‡. It is, therefore, almost certain, that the apostle John had frequently heard this term made use

\* See Beausobre, *Histoire de Manichéisme*, vol. i. p. 540.

† Opera L. i. Sec. iv. p. 14. ‡ Beausobre, vol. i. p. 571.



of, in some erroneous representations of the system of christianity that were current in his time, and therefore he might choose to introduce the same term in its proper sense, as an *attribute of the deity or God himself*, and not a distinct being that sprung from him. And this writer is not to be blamed if, afterwards, that very attribute was personified in a different manner, and not as a figure of speech, and consequently his language was made to convey a very different meaning from that which he affixed to it.

Athanasius himself was so far from denying that the primitive Jewish church was properly unitarian, maintaining the simple humanity and not the divinity of Christ, that he endeavours to account for it by saying \*, “that all the Jews were so firmly persuaded “ that their Messiah was to be nothing more than a “ man like themselves, that the apostles were obliged “ to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the “ proper divinity of Christ.” Many of the other early christian writers give the same account of the caution with which they supposed the apostles taught the unpopular doctrines of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ. But what the apostles did not openly teach; I think we should be cautious how we believe. The apostles were never backward to combat other Jewish prejudices, and certainly would have opposed this opinion of theirs, if it had been an error. For if it had been an error at all, it must be allowed to have been an error of the greatest consequence.

Could it rouse the indignation of the apostle John so much as to call those *Antichrist*, who held that *Christ was not come in the flesh*, or was not truly man, and would he have passed uncensured those who denied the divinity of his Lord and master, if he himself had thought him to be true and very God, his maker, as well as his redeemer? We may therefore safely conclude that an opinion allowed to have prevailed in his time, and maintained by all the Jewish christians afterwards, was what he himself and the other apostles had taught them, and therefore that it is the very truth; and consequently that the doctrine of the divi-

\* De Sententia Dionysii, Opera, vol. i. p. 553.



nity of Christ, or of his being any more than a man, is an innovation, in whatever manner it may have been introduced.

Had the apostles explained themselves distinctly and fully, as its importance, if it had been true, required, on the subject of the *proper divinity of Christ*, as a person equal to the Father, it can never be imagined that the whole Jewish church, or any considerable part of it, should so very soon have adopted the opinion of his being a *mere man*. To add to the dignity of their master, was natural, but to take from it, and especially to degrade him from being *God*, to being *man*, must have been very unnatural. To make the Jews abandon the opinion of the divinity of Christ in the most qualified sense of the word, must at least have been as difficult as we find it to be to induce others to give up the same opinion at this day; and there can be no question of their having, for some time, believed what the apostles taught on that, as well as on other subjects.

Of the same opinion with the Nazarenes, or Ebionites among the Jews, were those among the gentiles whom Epiphanius called *Alogi*, from their not receiving, as he says, the account that John gives of the *Logos*, and the writings of that apostle in general. But Lardner, with great probability supposes\*, there never was any such heresy as that of the *Alogi*, or rather that those to whom Epiphanius gave that name, were unjustly charged by him, with rejecting the writings of the apostle John, since no other person before him makes any mention of such a thing, and he produces nothing but mere hearsay in support of it. It is very possible, however, that he might give such an account of them, in consequence of their explaining the *Logos* in the introduction of John's gospel in a manner different from him, and others, who in that age had appropriated to themselves the name of orthodox.

Equally absurd is the conjecture of Epiphanius †, that those persons, and others like them, were those that the apostle John meant by *Antichrist*. It is a

\* Hist. of Heretics, p. 447. † Hær. 51. S. iii. Opera, vol. i. p. 424.



much more natural inference that, since this writer allows these unitarians to have been cotemporary with the apostles, and that they had no peculiar appellation till he himself gave them this of *Alogi* (and which he is very desirous\* that other writers would adopt after him) that they had not been deemed heretical in early times, but held the opinion of the ancient gentile church, as the Nazarenes did that of the Jewish church; and that, notwithstanding the introduction, and gradual prevalence of the opposite doctrine, they were suffered to pass uncensured, and consequently without a name, till the smallness of their numbers made them particularly noticed.

It is remarkable, however, that those who held the simple doctrine of the humanity of Christ, without asserting that Joseph was his natural father, were not reckoned heretics by Irenæus, who wrote a large work on the subject of heresies; and even those who held *that* opinion are mentioned with respect by Justin Martyr, who wrote some years before him, and who, indeed, is the first writer extant of the gentile christians, after the age of the apostles. And it cannot be supposed that he would have treated them with so much respect, if their doctrine had not been very generally received, and on that account less obnoxious than it grew to be afterwards. He expresses their opinion concerning Christ, by saying that they made him to be a *mere man*, ( $\psi\iota\lambda\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ ) and by this term Irenæus, and all the ancients, even later than Eusebius, meant *a man descended from man*, and this phraseology is frequently opposed to the doctrine of the miraculous conception of Jesus, and not to that of his divinity. It is not therefore to be inferred that because some of the ancient writers condemn the one, they meant to pass any censure upon the other.

The manner in which Justin Martyr speaks of those unitarians who believed Christ to be the son of Joseph, is very remarkable, and shews that though they even denied the miraculous conception, they were far from being reckoned heretics in his time, as they were by Irenæus afterwards. He says †, “there are some of

\* *Ib.* p. 423. † *Dial.* Edit. Thirlby, p. 235.



“our profession who acknowledged him” (Jesus) “to  
“be the Christ, yet maintain that he was a man born  
“of man. I do not agree with them, nor should I  
“be prevailed upon by ever so many who hold that  
“opinion; because we are taught by Christ himself  
“not to receive our doctrine from men, but from  
“what was taught by the holy prophets and by him-  
“self.”

This language has all the appearance of an *apology* for an opinion contrary to the general and prevailing one, as that of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of the miraculous conception) probably was in his time. This writer even speaks of his own opinion of the pre-existence of Christ (and he is the first that we certainly know to have maintained it, on the principles on which it was generally received afterwards) as a doubtful one, and by no means a necessary article of christian faith. “Jesus,” says he\*, “may  
“still be the Christ of God, though I should not be  
“able to prove his pre-existence, as the son of God  
“who made all things. For though I should not prove  
“that he had pre-existed, it will be right to say that,  
“in this respect only, I have been deceived, and not  
“to deny that he is the Christ, if he appears to be a  
“man born of men, and to have become Christ by  
“election.” This is not the language of a man very confident of his opinion, and who had the sanction of the majority along with him.

The reply of Trypho the Jew, with whom the dialogue he is writing is supposed to be held, is also remarkable, shewing in what light the Jews will always consider any doctrine which makes Christ to be more than a man. He says, “They who think that  
“Jesus was a man, and, being chosen of God, was  
“anointed Christ, appear to me to advance a more  
“probable opinion than yours. For all of us expect  
“that Christ will be born a man from man (*ανδρωπῶ*  
“*ἐξ ανδρωπῶ*) and that Elias will come to anoint him.  
“If he therefore be Christ, he must by all means be a  
“man born of man †.”

It is well known, and mentioned by Eusebius ‡, that

\* Ib. p. 225. † Edit. Thirlby, p. 235. ‡ Hist. p. 252.



the unitarians in the primitive church, always pretended to be the oldest christians, that the apostles themselves had taught their doctrine, and that it generally prevailed till the time of Zephyrinus bishop of Rome, but that from that time it was corrupted; and as these ancient unitarians are called *Idiotæ* (i. e. common and unlettered people) by Tertullian, it is more natural to look for ancient opinions among them, than among the learned, who are more apt to innovate. With such apparent unfairness does Eusebius, or a more ancient writer whose sentiments he adopts, treat these unitarians, as to say\* that Theodotus, who appeared about the year 190, and who was condemned by Victor the predecessor of Zephyrinus, was the first who held that our Saviour was a mere man; when in refuting their pretensions to antiquity, he goes no farther back than to Irenæus and Justin Martyr; though in his own writings alone he might have found a refutation of his assertion. Epiphanius speaking of the same Theodotus, says that his heresy was a branch (*εποσπασμα*) of that of the *Alogi*, which sufficiently implies that they existed before him †.

The *Alogi*, therefore, appear to have been the earliest gentile christians, and Berriman supposes them to have been a branch of the Ebionites ‡. In fact, they must have been the same among the gentiles, that the Ebionites were among the Jews. And it is remarkable that as the children of Israel retained the worship of the one true God all the time of Joshua, and of those of his contemporaries who outlived him; so the generality of christians retained the same faith, believing the strict unity of God, and the proper humanity of Christ, all the time of the apostles, and of those who conversed with them, but began to depart from that doctrine presently afterwards; and the defection advanced so fast, that in about one century more, the original doctrine was generally reprobated by the more learned christians, and deemed heretical. The manner in which this corruption of the ancient doctrine was introduced, I must now proceed to explain.

\* Hist. L. v. S. ii p. 252. † Hær. 54. Opera, vol. i, p. 462.

‡ Historical Account, p. 82.



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SECTION II.

*Of the first Step that was made towards the Deification of Christ, by the Personification of the Logos.*

As the greatest things often take their rise from the smallest beginnings, so the worst things sometimes proceed from good intentions. This was certainly the case with respect to the origin of christian idolatry. All the early heresies arose from men who wished well to the gospel, and who meant to recommend it to the heathens, and especially to philosophers among them, whose prejudices they found great difficulty in conquering. Now we learn from the writings of the apostles themselves, as well as from the testimony of later writers, that the circumstance at which mankind in general, and especially the more philosophical part of them stumbled the most, was the doctrine of a *crucified Saviour*. They could not submit to become the disciples of a man who had been exposed upon a cross like the vilest malefactor. Of this objection to christianity we find traces in all the early writers, who wrote in defence of the gospel against the unbelievers of their age, to the time of Lactantius; and probably it may be found much later. He says\*, "I know that many fly from the truth out of their abhorrence of the cross." We, who only learn from *history*, that crucifixion was a kind of death to which slaves, and the vilest of malefactors, were exposed, can but very imperfectly enter into their prejudices, so as to feel what they must have done with respect to it. The idea of a man executed at Tyburn, without any thing to distinguish him from other malefactors, is but an approach to the case of our Saviour.

The apostle Paul speaks of the crucifixion of Christ as the great obstacle to the reception of the gospel in his time; and yet, with true magnanimity, he does

\* Epitome, Cap. li. p. 143.



not go about to palliate the matter, but says to the Corinthians (some of the politest people among the Greeks, and fond of their philosophy) that "he was determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified:" for though this circumstance was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, it was to others the power of God and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. i. 23. For this circumstance at which they cavilled was that in which the wisdom of God was most conspicuous; the death and resurrection of a man, in all respects like themselves, being better calculated to give other men an assurance of their own resurrection, than that of any super-angelic being, the laws of whose nature they might think to be very different from those of their own. But "*as by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*" 1 Cor. xv. 21.

Later christians, however, and especially those who were themselves attached to the principles of either the oriental or the Greek philosophy, unhappily took another method of removing this obstacle; and instead of explaining the wisdom of the divine dispensations in the appointment of a man, a person *in all respects like unto his brethren*, for the redemption of *men*, and of his dying in the most public and indisputable manner, as a foundation for the clearest proof of a real resurrection, and also of a painful and ignominious death, as an example to his followers who might be exposed to the same, &c. &c. they began to raise the dignity of the *person* of Christ, that it might appear less disgraceful to be ranked among his disciples. To make this the easier to them, two things chiefly contributed, the first was the received method of interpreting the scriptures among the learned Jews, and the second was the philosophical opinions of the heathen world, which had then begun to infect the Jews themselves.

It has been observed that after the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which was done probably in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, in consequence of which the Jewish religion became better known to the Greeks, and especially to the philosophers of Alexandria, the more learned of the



Jews had recourse to an allegorical method of interpreting what they found to be most objected to in their sacred writings; and by this means pretended to find in the books of Moses, and the prophets, all the great principles of the Greek philosophy, and especially that of Plato, which at that time was most in vogue\*. In this method of interpreting scripture, Philo, a learned Jew of Alexandria, far excelled all who had gone before him; but the christians of that city, who were themselves deeply tinged with the principles of the same philosophy, especially Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, who both believed the pre-existence of souls, and the other distinguishing tenets of Platonism, soon followed his steps in the interpretation of both the Old and the New Testament.

One method of allegorizing, which took its rise in the East, was the personification of things without life, of which we have many beautiful examples, in the books of scripture, as of *wisdom* by Solomon, of *the dead* by Ezekiel, and of *sin* and *death* by the apostle Paul. Another method of allegorizing was finding out resemblances in things that bore some relation to each other, and then representing them as *types* and *antitypes* to each other. The apostle Paul, especially if he be the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, has strained very much, by the force of imagination, to reconcile the Jews to the christian religion, by pointing out the *analogies* which he imagined the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion bore to something in christianity. Clemens Romanus, but more especially Barnabas, pushed this method of allegorizing still farther. But the Fathers who followed them, by employing both the methods, and mixing their own philosophy with christianity, at length converted an innocent allegory into what was little better than pagan idolatry.

It had long been the received doctrine of the East, and had gradually spread into the western parts of the world, that besides the supreme divine mind, which had existed without cause from all eternity, there were other intelligences, of a less perfect nature,

\* Platonisme Devoilé, p. 246.



which had been produced by way of *emanation* from the great original mind, and that other intelligences, less and less perfect, had, in like manner, proceeded from them: in short, that all spirits, whether dæmons, or the souls of men, were of this divine origin. It was supposed by some of them that even *matter* itself, which they considered as the source of all evil, had, in this intermediate manner, derived its existence from the deity, though others supposed matter to have been eternal and self-existent. For it was a maxim with them all, that “nothing could be created out of nothing.” In this manner they thought they could best account for the origin of evil, without supposing it to be the immediate production of a good being, which the original divine mind was always supposed by them to be.

In order to exalt their idea of Jesus Christ, it being then a received opinion among the philosophers that all souls had pre-existed, they conceived his soul, not to have been that of a common man (which were generally supposed to have been the production of inferior beings) but a principal *emanation* from the divine mind itself, and that an intelligence of so high a rank either animated the body of Jesus from the beginning, or entered into him at his baptism. There was, however, a great diversity of opinion on this subject; and indeed there was room enough for it, in a system which was not founded on any observation, but was the mere creature of fancy. But all these philosophizing christians had the same general object, which was to make the religion of Christ more reputable, by adding to the dignity of our Lord’s person.

Thus, according to Lardner\*, Cerinthus, one of the first of these philosophizing christians, taught that there was one supreme God, but that the world was not made by him, but by angels; that Jesus was a man born of Joseph and Mary, and that at his baptism the Holy Spirit, or the Christ, descended upon him; that Jesus died and rose again, but that the Christ was impassible. On the other hand, Marcion held that Christ was not born at all, but that the son of God

\* History of Heretics, p. 150.



took the exterior form of man, without being born, or gradually growing up to a proper size, and shewed himself at once in Gallilee, a man full grown †. All the heretics, however, of this class, whose philosophy was more properly that of the East, thought it was unworthy of so exalted a person as the proper *Christ* to be truly a man, and most of them thought he had no real flesh, but only the appearance of it, and what was incapable of feeling pain, &c.

These opinions the apostles and especially John had heard of, and he rejected them, as we have seen, with the greatest indignation. However, this did not put a stop to the evil, those philosophizing christians either having ingenuity enough to evade those censures, by pretending it was not *their* opinions, but others somewhat different from theirs, that properly fell under them; or new opinions really different from them, but derived in fact from the same source, and having the same evil tendency, rising up in the place of them: for they were all calculated to give more dignity, as they imagined, to the person of their master. The most remarkable change in these opinions was that, whereas the earliest of these philosophizing christians supposed, in general, that the world was made by some superior intelligence of no benevolent nature, and that the Jewish religion was prescribed by the same being, or one very much resembling him, and that Christ was sent to rectify the imperfections of both systems; those who succeeded them, and whose success at length gave them the title of orthodox, corrupted the genuine christian principle no less, by supposing that Christ was the being who, under God, was himself the maker of the world, and the medium of all the divine communications to man, and therefore the author of the Jewish religion.

As Plato had travelled into the East, it is probable that he there learned the doctrine of divine emanations, and got his ideas of the origin of this visible system. But he sometimes expresses himself so temperately on the subject, that he seems to have only allegorized what is true with respect to it; speaking of the divine

† History of Heretics, p. 227.



mind as having existed from eternity, but having within itself *ideas* or *archetypes* of whatever was to exist without it, and saying that the immediate seat of these ideas, or the intelligence which he styled *υ̅ς*, and which Philo termed *Logos*, was that from which the visible creation immediately sprung. However, it was to this principle in the divine mind, or this Being derived from it, that Plato, according to Lactantius\*, gave the name of a *second God*, saying, “the Lord “and maker of the universe, whom we justly call “God, made a second God visible and sensible.”

By this means, however, it was, that this *Logos*, originally an *attribute* of the divine mind itself, came to be represented, first by the philosophers, and then by philosophizing christians, as an *intelligent principle*, or *being*, distinct from God, though an emanation from him. This doctrine was but too convenient for those who wished to recommend the religion of Christ. Accordingly, they immediately fixed upon this *Logos* as the intelligence which was in some inexplicable manner united to his soul, and by the help of the allegorical method of interpreting the scriptures, to which they had been sufficiently accustomed, they easily found authorities there for their opinions.

Thus, since we read in the book of Psalms, that *by the word of the Lord* (which, in the translation of the Seventy, is the *Logos*) *the Heavens were made*, &c. they concluded that this *Logos* was Christ, and therefore that, under God, he was the maker of the world. They also applied to him what Solomon says of *wisdom*, in the book of Proverbs, as having been *in the beginning with God*, and employed by him in making the world. But there is one particular passage in the book of Psalms, in which they imagined that the origin of the *Logos*, by way of emanation from the divine mind, is most clearly expressed, which is what we render, *My heart is inditing a good matter*. Psalm xlv. 1, this *matter* being *Logos* in the Seventy, and the verb *επειρομεν* throwing out being made use of, they render it, *My heart throws out the Logos*. Nothing can appear to us more ungrounded than this suppositi-

\* Epitome Cap. xliii. p. 106.



on, and yet we find it in all the writers who treat of the divinity of Christ for several centuries in ecclesiastical history. After this we cannot wonder at their being at no loss for proofs of their doctrine in any part of scripture.

But Philo the Jew went before the christians in the personification of the *Logos*, and in this mode of interpreting what is said of it in the Old Testament. For he calls this divine word a *second God*, and sometimes attributes the creation of the world to this second God, thinking it below the majesty of the great God himself. He also calls this personified attribute of God his *πρόλογος*, or his *first born*, and the *image of God*. He says that he is neither unbegotten, like God, nor begotten as we are, but the middle between the two extremes\*. We also find that the Chaldee paraphrasts of the Old Testament often render the *word of God*, as if it was a being distinct from God, or some angel who bore the name of God, and acted by deputation from him. So, however, it hath been interpreted, though with them it might be no more than an idiom of speech.

The christian philosophers having once got the idea that the *Logos* might be interpreted of Christ, proceeded to explain what John says of the *Logos* in the introduction of his gospel to mean the same person, in direct opposition to what he really meant, which was that the *Logos*, by which all things were made, was not a being distinct from God, but God himself, being his attribute, his wisdom and power, dwelling in Christ, speaking and acting by him. Accordingly we find some of the earlier unitarians charging those who were called orthodox with an innovation in their interpretation of the term *Logos*. "But thou wilt tell me something strange, in saying that the *Logos* is the Son." *Hippolytus contra Noetum*, quoted by Beausobre†.

We find nothing like *divinity* ascribed to Christ before Justin Martyr, who from being a philosopher

\* See *Platonisme Devoilé*, p. 105, and Le Clerc's commentary on the introduction to the first chapter of John.

† *Histoire de Manichéisme*, vol. i. p. 542.



became a christian, but always retained the peculiar habit of his former profession. As to Clemens Romanus, who was cotemporary with the apostles, when he is speaking in the highest terms concerning Christ, he only calls him *the scepter of the majesty of God*\*, Whether Justin Martyr was the very first who started the notion of Christ being the *Logos* of the Father, is not certain, but we are not able to trace it any higher †. We find it, indeed, briefly mentioned in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, but though this is supposed by some to be the Hermas mentioned by Paul, and to have been written towards the end of the first century, others suppose this to be the work of one Hermes, brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, and to have been written about the year 141, or perhaps later; and as this work contains such a pretension to visions and revelations, as is unworthy of the Hermas mentioned by Paul, I cannot help being of this opinion. He says ‡, “having seen  
“an old rock and a new gate, they represent the son  
“of God, who was more ancient than any creature,  
“so as to be present with the Father at the creation,”  
“*ad condendam creaturam.*” The book was written in Greek; but we have only a Latin version of it.

Justin Martyr being a philosopher, and writing an apology for christianity to a philosophical Roman emperor, would naturally wish to represent it in what would appear to him, and other philosophers, in the most favourable light; and this disposition appears by several circumstances. Thus he represents virtuous men, in all preceding ages, as being in a certain sense *christians*; and apologizing for calling Christ the *son of God* he says §, that “this cannot be new to them who  
“speak of Jupiter as having sons, and especially of  
“Mercury, as his interpreter, and the instructor of all  
“men,” (*λογον ερμηνευτικον και παντων διδασκαλον*) On the same subject he says ||, “If Christ be a mere man,  
“yet he deserves to be called the son of God, on account of his wisdom; and the heathens called God

\* Epistle. Section xvi. † It has been shewn by Mr. Lindsey, in his *Second Address to the Students of Oxford and Cambridge*, that Justin Martyr considered himself as the first who advanced the opinion of Christ being the *Logos*, and therefore properly *divine*. ‡ Lib. iii. Sim. ix. S. xii. p. 115. § Apol. i. Ed. Thirlby, p. 31. || P. 33.



“ (i. e. Jupiter) the father of Gods and men ; and if,  
 “ in an extraordinary manner, he be the *Logos* of God,  
 “ this is common with those who call Mercury the  
 “ *Logos* that declares the will of God,” (λογον του  
 παρα θεου αγγελικον.)

With this disposition to make his religion appear in the most respectable light to the heathens, and having himself professed the doctrine of Plato, can it be thought extraordinary, that he eagerly caught at the doctrine of the *Logos*, which he found ready formed to his hands in the works of Philo, and that he introduced it into the christian system ; that Irenæus, who was also educated among the philosophers, about the same time, did the same thing ; or that others, who were themselves sufficiently pre-disposed to act the same part, should follow their example ?

That the doctrine of the separate divinity of Christ was at first nothing more than a personification of a divine attribute, or of that wisdom and power by which God made the world, is evident from the manner in which the earliest writers who treat of the subject mention it. Justin Martyr, who was the first who undertook to prove that Christ was the medium of the divine dispensations in the Old Testament, as\* that, “ he was the person sometimes called an *Angel*, and “ sometimes *God*, and *Lord*, and that he was the *man* “ who sometimes appeared to Abraham and Jacob, and “ he that spake to Moses from the fiery bush,” does it, as we have seen above, with a considerable degree of diffidence ; saying that, “ if he should not be able to “ prove his pre-existence, it would not therefore follow that he was not the Christ.” And as new opinions do not readily lay firm hold on the mind, forms of expression adapted to preceding opinions, will now and then occur, and as good sense will, in all cases, often get the better of imagination, we sometimes find these early writers drop the personification of the *Logos*, and speak of it as the mere attribute of God.

Thus Theophilus, who was cotemporary with Justin, though a later writer, says †, that when God said *Let us make man*, he spake to nothing but his own

\* Dial. Ed. Thirlby, p. 263. † Ad. Aut. Lib. ii. p. 114.



*Logos*, or wisdom ; and according to Origen, Christ was the eternal reason, or wisdom of God. He says\*, that, “ by the second God, we mean only a virtue” (or perhaps power) “ which comprehends all other virtues, “ or a reason which comprehends all other reasons, “ and that this reason (*λογος*) is particularly attached “ to the soul of Christ.” Also explaining John i. 3, he says, “ God can do nothing without reason (*παρὰ λόγον*) i. e. without himself” (*παρ’ εαυτον*) †.

Athenagoras, who wrote in the second century, calls Christ ‡, the first production (*γεννημα*) of the Father ; but says he was not always actually produced, (*γενομενον*) for that from the beginning God, being an eternal mind, had reason (*λογος*) in himself, being from eternity rational (*λογικος*).

Tatian, who was also his cotemporary, gives us a fuller account of this matter. He says §, “ when he “ (that is, God) pleased, the word (*Logos*) flowed “ from his simple essence ; and this word not being “ produced in vain, became the first begotten work of “ his spirit. This we know to be the origin of the “ word : but it was produced by *division*, not by *separation*, for that which is divided (*μερισθεν*) does not “ diminish that from which it derives its power. For “ as many torches may be lighted from one, and yet “ the light of the first torch is not diminished, so the “ word (*Logos*) proceeding from the power of the “ Father, does not leave the Father void of *Logos*. “ Also, if I speak and you hear me, I am not void of “ speech (*Logos*) on account of my speech (*Logos*) “ going to you.”

If Irenæus had this idea of the generation of the *Logos*, as no doubt he had, it is no wonder that he speaks of it as a thing of so wonderful a nature. “ If “ any one,” says he, “ || asks us, how is the Son produced from the Father, we tell him that whether it “ be called *generation*, *nuncupation*, or *adapertion*, or “ by whatever other name this ineffable generation be “ called, no one knows it ; neither Valentinus, nor “ Marcion, nor Saturninus, nor Basilides, nor An-

\* Contra Celsum, Lib. v. p. 259. † Ibid. p. 247. ‡ Apol. p. 82. § Contra Græcos, p. 145. || Lib. 2. Cap. xlviii. p. 176.



“gels, nor Archangels, nor Principalities, nor Powers ; but only the Father who begat, and the Son who is begotten.”

Tertullian, whose orthodoxy in this respect was never questioned, does not seem, however, to have any difficulty in conceiving how this business was, but writes in such a manner, as if he had been let into the whole secret ; and we see in him the wretched expedients to which the orthodox of that age had recourse, in order to convert a mere *attribute* into a *real person*. For it must be understood that when the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was first started, it was not pretended, except by Irenæus in the passage above quoted (who was writing against persons who pretended to more knowledge of this mysterious business than himself) that there was any thing *unintelligible* in it, or that could not be explained. Every thing, indeed, in that age was called a *mystery* that was reputed *sacred*, and the knowledge of which was confined to a few ; but the idea of *unintelligible*, or *inexplicable*, was not then affixed to the word *mystery*. The heathen mysteries, from which the christians borrowed the term, were things perfectly well known, and understood by those who were *initiated*, though concealed from the vulgar.

“Before all things,” says this writer\*, “God was alone ; but not absolutely alone, for he had with him his own *reason*, since God is a rational being. This reason the Greeks called *Logos*, which word we now render *sermo*. And that you may more easily understand this from yourself, consider that you, who are made in the image of God, have reason within yourself. When you silently consider with yourself, it is by means of reason that you do it.†”

On this stating of the case, it was natural to object,

\* Ad. Praxeam, Cap. v. p. 502. † Ante omnia Deus erat solus. Ceterum ne tunc quidem solus ; habebat, enim, secum, rationem suam. Rationalis enim Deus. Hanc Græci λογον dicunt, quo vocabulo etiam *sermonem* appellamus. Idque, quo facilius intelligas ex teipso, ante recognosce et ex imagine et similitudine dei, quum habeas et tu in temetipso rationem, qui es animal rationale.—Vide quum tacitus tecum ipse congrederis, ratione hoc ipsum agi intra te, &c.



that the reason of a man can never be converted into a *substance*, so as to constitute a thinking being, distinct from the man himself. But, he says, that though this is the case with respect to man, yet nothing can proceed from God but what is substantial. "You will say," says he \*, "but what is *speech* besides a *word* or *sound*, something unsubstantial and incorporeal. But I say that nothing unsubstantial and incorporeal can proceed from God, because it does not proceed from what is itself unsubstantial; nor can that want substance, which proceeds from so great a substance †."

Having, in this manner (lame enough to be sure) got over the great difficulty of the conversion of a mere *attribute* into a *substance*, and a thinking substance too, this writer proceeds to ascertain the time when this conversion took place; and he, together with all the early Fathers, says that it was at the very instant of the creation. "Then," says he ‡, "did this speech assume its *form* and *dress*, its *sound* and *voice* when God said, *Let there be light*. This is the perfect nativity of the *word*, when it *proceeded from God*. From this time making him equal to himself," (by which phrase, however, we are only to understand *like* himself) "from which procession he became his son, his first born, and only begotten, begotten before all things §."

This method of explaining the origin of the personality of the *Logos* continued to the council of Nice, and even afterwards. For Lactantius, who was tutor to the son of Constantine, gives us the same account of this business, with some little variation, teaching us to distinguish the son of God from the angels, whom he likewise conceived to be emanations from the divine

\* Ibid. Cap. vii. p. 503.

† Quid est enim dices *sermo* nisi *vox*, et *sonus oris*. Vacuum nescio quid, et inane, et incorporale. At ego nihil dico de deo inane et vacuum prodire potuisse, ut non de inani et vacuo prolatum, nec carere substantia, quod de tanta substantia processit, &c.

‡ Ibid.

§ Tunc ipse sermo speciem et ornatum suum sumit, sonum et vocem, quum dicit Deus *fiat lux*. Hæc est nativitas perfecta sermonis, dum ex deo procedit. Exinde eum parem sibi faciens, de quo procedendo filius factus est *primo genitus*, et ante omnia genitus, et unigenitus, et solus deo genitus.



mind. "How," says he\*, "did he beget him?" (that is Christ) "The sacred scriptures inform us that the son of God is the *sermo*, or *ratio* (the speech or reason) of God, also that the other angels are the breath of God *spiritus dei*. But *sermo* (speech) is breath emitted, together with a voice, expressive of something; and because *speech* and *breathing* proceed from different parts, there is a great difference between the son of God, and the other angels. For they are mere *silent breathings* (*spiritus taciti*) because they were created not to teach the knowledge of God, but for *service* (*ad ministrandum*). But he being also a *breathing* (*spiritus*) yet proceeding from the mouth of God with a voice and sound, is the *word*; for this reason, because he was to be a teacher of the knowledge of God, &c." He therefore calls him *spiritus vocalis*. Then, in order to account for our breathings not producing similar spirits, he says, that "our breathings are *dissoluble*, because we are mortal, but the breathings of God are permanent; they live and feel, because he is immortal, the giver of sense and life."

All the early Fathers speak of Christ as not having existed always, except as reason exists in man (*viz.*) an attribute of the deity; and for this reason they speak of the Father as not being a Father always, but only from the time that he made the world. "Before any thing was made," says Theophilus†, God had the "*Logos*" for his council; being his *νους* or *φρονησις* (*reason* or *understanding*) but when he proceeded to produce what he had determined upon, he then emitted the *Logos*, the first born of every creature, not emptying himself of *Logos* (reason) but *λογον γεννησας* (begetting reason) and always conversing with his own *Logos*" (reason).

Justin Martyr also gives the same explanation of the emission of the *Logos* from God, without depriving himself of reason, and he illustrates it by what we observe in ourselves. For "in uttering any word," he says‡, we beget a word (*Logos*) not taking any thing

\* Inst. lib. iv. Sec. viii. p. 371.

† Ad Autolyicum, Lib. ii. p. 129. ‡ Edit. Thirlby, p. 266.



from ourselves, so as to be lessened by it, but as we see one fire produced from another.

Clemens Alexandrinus calls the Father alone *without beginning* (ἀναρχος) and immediately after he characterizes the Son, as the *beginning*, and the *first fruits* of things (ἀρχὴν καὶ ἀπαρχὴν τῶν ὄντων) from whom we must learn the Father of all, the most ancient and beneficent of beings\*. Tertullian expressly says that “God  
“ was not always a father, or a judge, since he could  
“ not be a father before he had a son, nor a judge be-  
“ fore sin; and there was a time when both *sin* and the  
“ *son* (which made God to be a *judge* and a *father*) were  
“ not †.

This language was held at the time of the council of Nice, for Lactantius says ‡, “God, before he under-  
“ took the making of the world, produced a holy and  
“ incorruptible spirit, which he might call his *Son*;  
“ and afterwards he by him created innumerable other  
“ spirits, whom he calls *angels*.” The church, says Hilary §, “knows one unbegotten God, and one only  
“ begotten Son of God. It acknowledges the Father  
“ to be without origin, and it acknowledges the origin  
“ of the Son from eternity, not himself without be-  
“ ginning, but from him who is without beginning  
“ (*ab ininitiabili*).” It is not impossible that Hilary  
“ might have an idea of the eternal generation  
of the Son, though the Fathers before the council of Nice had no such idea. For the Platonists in general thought that the creation was from eternity, there never having been any time in which the divine Being did not act. But, in general, by the phrase *from eternity*, and *before all time*, &c. the ancient christian writers seem to have meant any period before the creation of the world.

Consistently with this representation, but very inconsistently with the modern doctrine of the Trinity, the Fathers supposed the son of God to have been begotten *voluntarily*, so that it depended upon the Father himself whether he would have a son or not. “I will  
“ produce you another testimony from the scrip-  
“ tures,” says Justin Martyr ||, “that in the begin-

\* Strom. Lib. vii. Opera, p. 700. † Ad Hermogenem, Cap. iii. p. 234. ‡ Inst. Lib. iv. p. 364. § De Trinitate, Lib. iv. || Edit. Thirlby, p. 266.



“ning, before all the creatures, God begat from him-  
 “self a certain reasonable power *δυναμιν λογικην*) who  
 “by the spirit is sometimes called *the glory of God*,  
 “sometimes *God*, sometimes the *Lord*, and *Logos*, be-  
 “cause he is subservient to his Father’s will, and was  
 “begotten at his Father’s pleasure.”

Novatus says\*, “God the Father is therefore the  
 “maker and creator of all things, who alone hath  
 “no origin, invifible, immense, immortal, and eter-  
 “nal, the one God, to whose greatness and majesty  
 “nothing can be compared, from whom, when he  
 “himself pleased, the word (*Sermo*) was born.”  
 Eusebius, quoted by Dr. Clarke †, fays, though light  
 does not fhine at the will of the luminous body from  
 the neceffary property of its nature; the Son became  
 the image of his Father from his will and choice; for  
 God at his pleasure (*βεληθεης*) became the Father of the  
 Son.

The Fathers of the council of Sirmium ‡ fay, “if  
 “any fay that the Son was not begotten at the will of  
 “the Father, let him be an anathema. For the Fa-  
 “ther, did not beget the Son by a physical neceffity  
 “of nature, without the operation of his will, but  
 “he at once willed, and begat the Son, and produced  
 “him from himfelf, without all time, and without  
 “fuffering any diminution from himfelf.” Hilary  
 mentions his approbation of this fentiment, but we  
 fhall fee that Austin corrects him for it. A ftrong pas-  
 fage in favour of the voluntary production of the fon  
 of God may alfo be feen quoted from Gregory Nyffen,  
 by Dr. Clarke, in the place above referred to.

### SECTION III.

*That Supremacy was always afcribed to the Father before  
 the Council of Nice.*

WE find on all occasions the early christian writers  
 fpeak of the Father as fuperior to the Son, and in ge-

\* De Trinitate, Cap. x. p. 31. † Ibid. p. 252.

‡ Clarke on the Trinity, p. 252.



neral they give him the title of *God*, as distinguished from the Son; and sometimes they expressly call him, exclusively of the Son, *the only true God*; a phraseology which does not at all accord with the idea of the perfect equality of all the persons in the Trinity. But it might well be expected, that the advances to the present doctrine of the Trinity should be gradual and slow. It was, indeed, some centuries before it was completely formed.

It is not a little amusing to observe how the Fathers of the second, third, and fourth centuries were embarrassed with the heathens on the one hand, to whom they wished to recommend their religion, by exalting the person of its founder, and with the ancient Jewish and Gentile converts (whose prejudices against polytheism, they also wished to guard against) on the other. Willing to conciliate the one, and yet not to offend the other, they are particularly careful at the same time that they give the appellation of *God* to Jesus Christ, to distinguish between him and the Father, giving a decided superiority to the latter. Of this I think it may be worth while to produce a number of examples, from the time that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was first started, to the time of the council of Nice; for till that time, and even something later, did this language continue to be used. Clemens Romanus never calls Christ, *God*. He says\*, “Have we not all one God, and one Christ, “and one spirit of grace poured upon us all?” which is exactly the language of the apostle Paul, with whom he was in part cotemporary.

Justin Martyr, who is the first that we can find to have advanced the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, says†, “He who appeared to Abraham, and to Isaac, “and to Jacob, was subordinate to the Father, and “minister to his will.” He even says‡, that “the “Father is the author to him both of his existence, “and of his being powerful, and of his being Lord “and God.”

“All the evangelists,” says Irenæus§, have delivered to us “the doctrine of one God, and one Christ

\* Sect. xlv. † P. 279. ‡ Edit. Thirlby, p. 281.

§ Lib. iii. Cap. 1. p. 199.



“ the son of God ;” and invoking the Father\* he calls him the only God ; and according to several of the most considerable of the early christian writers, a common epithet by which the Father is distinguished from the Son, is that he alone is (αὐτοθεός) or God of himself.

Origen, quoted by Dr. Clarke †, says, “ to them who charge us that we believe two Gods, we must reply, that he who is God of himself (αὐτοθεός) is the God (ο θεός) for which reason our Saviour says, in his prayer to the Father, *that they may know thee the only true God.* But whatever is God besides him who is so of himself, being God only by a communication of his divinity, cannot so properly be called (ο θεός) the God, but rather (θεός) God.” The same observation had before been made by Clemens Alexandrinus, who also calls the Son a creature, and the work of God ‡. Origen also says, “ According to our doctrine, the God and Father of all is not alone great : for he has communicated of his greatness to the first begotten of all the creation,” (πρωτόγονος πατρὸς κτιστός) §.

Novatus says ||, that “ the Sabellians make too much of the divinity of the Son, when they say it is that of the Father, extending his honour beyond bounds. They dare to make him not the Son, but God the Father himself. And again, they acknowledge the divinity of Christ in too boundless and unrestrained a manner.” (effrenatius et effusius in Christo divinitatem confiteri). The same writer also says ¶, “ The Son to whom the divinity is communicated is, indeed, God ; but God the Father of all is deservedly God of all, and the origin (principium) of his Son, whom he begat Lord.”

Arnobius says \*\*, “ Christ, a God, under the form of a man, speaking by the order of the principal God. Again ††, then, at length, did God Almighty, the only God, send Christ.”

Such language as this was held till the time of the

\* Lib. iii. Cap. vi. † Ib. p. 5. ‡ Sandii. Nucleus Hist. Eccl. p. 94. § Contra. Celsum, Lib. vi. p. 323. || Cap. xxiii. ¶ Cap. xxxi. \*\* Ad. Gentes, Lib. ii. p. 50. †† P. 57.



council of Nice. Alexander, who is very severe upon Eusebius bishop of Nicomedia, who was charged with favouring Arianism, says in his circular letter to the bishops, “the Son is of a middle nature between the first cause of all things, and the creatures, which were created out of nothing\*.” Athanasius himself, as quoted by Dr. Clarke, says †, “the nature of God is the cause both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and of all creatures.” He also says ‡, “There is but one God, because the Father is but one, yet is the son also God, having such a sameness as that of a Son to a Father.”

Lactantius says §, “Christ taught that there is one God, and that he alone ought to be worshipped; neither did he ever call himself God, because he would not have been true to his trust, if being sent to take away gods (that is, a multiplicity of gods) and to assert one, he had introduced another besides that one. Because he assumed nothing at all to himself, he received the dignity of perpetual priest, the honour of sovereign king, the power of a judge, and the name of God.”

Hilary, who wrote twelve books on the doctrine of the Trinity, after the council of Nice, to prove that the Father himself is the only self existing God, and in a proper sense the only true God (*quod solus innascibilis, et quod solus verus sit*) after alleging a passage from the prophet Isaiah, quotes in support of it the saying of our Saviour. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* ||. Much more might be alleged from this writer to the same purpose.

Lastly, Epiphanius says ¶, “who is there who does not assert that there is only one God, the Father Almighty, from whom his only begotten Son truly proceeded.”

Indeed, that the Fathers of the council of Nice could not mean that the Son was strictly speaking equal to the Father, is evident from their calling him *God of God*,

\* Theodorit, Lib. i. Cap. iv. p. 17. † P. 276. ‡ P. 222.  
§ Institutionum, lib. iv. c. xiii. || De Trinitate, lib. iv. p. 56.  
¶ Hær. lvii. Opera, vol. i. p. 483.



which in that age was opposed to God of himself (*αὐτοθεός*) that is, *self existent* or *independent*; which was always understood to be the prerogative of the Father. It is remarkable that when the writers of that age spake of Christ as *existing from eternity*, they did not therefore suppose that he was properly *self-existent*. Thus Alexander bishop of Alexandria says \*,  
 “ we believe that the son was always from the Father ;  
 “ but let no one by the word *always* be led to imagine  
 “ him *self-existent* (*αὐτεννῆς*) for neither the term *was*,  
 “ nor *always*, nor *before all ages*, mean the same thing  
 “ as *self-existent* (*αὐτεννῆς*).”

On these principles the primitive Fathers had no difficulty in the interpretation of that saying of our Lord, *My Father is greater than I*. They never thought of saying, that he was *equal to the Father with respect to his divinity, though inferior with respect to his humanity*; which is the only sense of the passage that the doctrine of the Trinity in its present state admits of. For they thought that the son was in all respects, and in his whole person inferior to his Father, as having derived his being from him.

Tertullian had this idea of the passage when he said, † “ the Father is all substance, but the Son is a  
 “ derivation from him, and a part, as he himself declares, *the Father is greater than I*.” It is also remarkable, as Mr. Whiston observes, that the ancient Fathers, both Greek and Latin, never interpret Phil. ii. 7, to mean an equality of the Son to the Father ‡. Novatus says, “ he therefore, though he was in  
 “ the form of God, did not make himself equal to  
 “ God (*non est rapinam arbitratus equalem se deo esse*) for though he remembered he was *God, of God*  
 “ the Father, he never compared himself to God the  
 “ Father, being mindful that he was of his Father,  
 “ and that he had this because his Father gave it  
 “ him §.”

It also deserves to be noticed, that notwithstanding the supposed derivation of the son from the Father, and therefore their being of *the same substance*, most of

\* Theodorit, lib. i. cap. iv. p. 19. † Ad Praxeam, sec. ix. p. 504 ‡ Collections, p. 109. § Cap. xvii. p. 84.



the early christian writers thought the text *I and my Father are one*, was to be understood of an unity or harmony of *disposition* only. Thus Tertullian\* observes, that the expression is *unum*, *one thing*, not *one person*; and he explains it to mean *unity*, *likeness*, *conjunction*, and of the *love that the Father bore to the Son*. Origen says, let him consider that text, *all that believed were of one heart and of one soul*, and then he will understand this, *I and my Father are one* †. Novatus ‡ says *one thing* (*unum*) being in the neuter gender, signifies an agreement of society, not an unity of person, and he explains it by this passage in Paul, *he that planteth and he that watereth are both one*. But the Fathers of the council of Sardica, held A. D. 347, reprobated the opinion that the union of the Father and Son consists in consent and concord only §, apprehending it to be a *strict unity of substance*; so much farther was the doctrine of the Trinity advanced at that time.

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#### SECTION IV.

*Of the Difficulty with which the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was established.*

IT is sufficiently evident from many circumstances, that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ did not establish itself without much opposition, especially from the *unlearned* among the christians, who thought that it favoured of *polytheism*, that it was introduced by those who had had a philosophical education, and was by degrees adopted by others, on account of its covering the great *offence of the cross*, by exalting the personal dignity of our Saviour.

To make the new doctrine less exceptionable, the advocates for it invented a new term, viz. *conomy*, or *distribution*, as it may be rendered; saying they

\* Ad. Praxeam, cap. xxii. p. 513. † Contra Celsum, lib. viii, p. 386. ‡ Cap. xxvii. p. 99. § Theodorit, lib. ii. cap. viii. p. 82.



were far from denying the *unity of God*; but that there was a certain *œconomy*, or distribution respecting the divine nature and attributes which did not interfere with it; for that according to this *œconomy* the Son might be God, without detracting from the supreme divinity of the Father. But this new term, it appears, was not well understood, or easily relished, by those who called themselves the advocates for the *monarchy of the Father*, a term much used in those days, to denote the supremacy and sole divinity of the Father, in opposition to that of the Son. All this is very clear from the following passage in Tertullian\*.

“The simple, the ignorant, and the unlearned, who are always the greater part of the body of christians, since the rule of faith itself” (meaning perhaps the *apostles creed*, or as much of it as was in use in his time) “transfers their worship of many gods to the one true God, not understanding that the unity of God is to be maintained, but with the *œconomy*, dread this *œconomy*, imagining that this number and disposition of a Trinity is a division of the unity. They therefore will have it, that we are worshippers of two, and even of three Gods; but that they are the worshippers of one God only. We, they say, hold the *monarchy*. Even the Latins have learned to bawl out for monarchy, and the Greeks themselves will not understand the *œconomy* ;” monarchy being a Greek term, and yet adopted by the Latins, and *œconomy*, though a Greek term, not being relished even by the Greek christians.†

On another occasion we see by this writer how offensive the word *Trinity* was to the generality of christians. “Does the number of Trinity still shock you?” says

\* Ad Praxeam, sec. iii. p. 502. † Simplicēs enim, nec dixerim imprudentes et idiotæ, quæ major semper credentium pars est, quoniam et ipsa regula fidei a pluribus diis seculi ad unicum deum verum transfert, non intelligentes unicum quidem, sed cum sua *œconomia* esse, credendum, expavescunt ad *œconomiam*. Numerum et dispositionem trinitatis divisionem præsumunt unitatis. Itaque duos et tres jam jactitant, a nobis prædicari, se vero unius dei cultores præsumunt. Monarchiam inquiunt tenemus. Monarchiam sonare student Latini, *œconomiam* intelligere nolunt etiam Græci.



he\*, For this reason, no doubt, Origen says, "that  
 " to the carnal they taught the gospel in a literal way,  
 " preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified, but to per-  
 " sons farther advanced, and burning with love for  
 " divine celestial wisdom," (by which he must mean  
 the philosophical part of their audience) "they com-  
 " municated the *Logos*†."

Origen candidly calls these adherents to the doctrine  
 of the strict unity of God pious persons (*φιλοθεοι*).  
 "Hence, says he ‡, we may solve the scruple of many  
 " pious persons, who through fear lest they should  
 " make two Gods, fall into false and wicked notions."  
 He endeavours to relieve them in this manner. "This  
 " scruple of many pious persons may thus be solved.  
 " We must tell them, that he who is God of himself  
 " (*αυτοθεος*) is God with the article (*ο θεος*) but that  
 " Christ is God without the article (*θεος*)," as was  
 observed before. How far this solution of the difficulty  
 was satisfactory to these pious unlearned christians does  
 not appear. It does not seem calculated to remove a  
 difficulty of any great magnitude.

That these ancient unitarians, under all the names  
 by which their adversaries thought proper to distinguish  
 them, have been greatly misrepresented, is acknow-  
 ledged by all who are candid among the moderns. The  
 learned Beausobre, himself a trinitarian, is satisfied it  
 was a zeal for the unity of God that actuated the Sa-  
 bellians (who were no more than unitarians under a  
 particular denomination). Epiphanius says, that when  
 a Sabellian met the orthodox they would "say, My  
 " friends, do we believe one God, or three §?"

Eusebius, speaking with great wrath against Marcellus  
 of Ancyra, allows that he did not deny the personality  
 of the Son, but for fear of establishing two Gods||. This  
 also appears from the manner in which Eusebius ex-  
 presses himself when he answers to the charge of in-  
 troducing two Gods. "But you are afraid perhaps  
 " (*φοβη*) lest, acknowledging two distinct hypostases,

\* Sic te adhuc numerus scandalizat trinitatis. Ad Praxeam,  
 Sec. xii. p. 506. † Preface to his Comment on John, Opera,  
 vol. ii. p. 225. ‡ Clarke on the Trinity, p. 802. § Hær.  
 lxii. Opera. vol. i. p. 514. || Ib. p. 536,



“you should introduce two original principles, and  
“so destroy the monarchy of God \*.”

Basil complains of the popularity of the followers of Marcellus, whose disciple Photinus is said to have been; at the same time that the name of Arius was execrated. “Unto this very time,” says he, in his letter to Athanasius†, “in all their letters they fail  
“not to anathematize the hated name of Arius; but  
“with Marcellus, who has profanely taken away the  
“the very existence of the divinity of the only begotten Son, and abused the signification of the word  
“*Logos*, with this man they seem to find no fault at all.”

It was impossible not to perceive that this *economy*, and the style and rank of *God*, given to Christ made a system, intirely different from that of the Jews, as laid down in the Old Testament. For christians either had not at that time laid much stress on any argument for the doctrine of the Trinity drawn from the books of Moses, or at least had not been able to satisfy the Jews or the Jewish christians, with any representations of that kind. Tertullian, therefore, makes another, and indeed a very bold attempt for the same purpose; saying that it was peculiar to the Jewish faith so to maintain the unity of God, as not to admit the Son or Spirit to any participation of the divinity with him; but that it was the characteristic of the gospel, to introduce the Son and Spirit, as making one God with the Father. He says, that God was determined to renew his covenant in this *new form*. I shall give his own words, which are much more copious on the subject, in a note ‡.

When the philosophizing christians went beyond the mere personification of a divine attribute, and proceeded to speak of the *real substance*, as I may say, of

\* Clarke on the Trinity, p. 309. † Opera, vol. iii. p. 80:

‡ Judaicæ fides ista res sic unum deum credere, ut filium adnumerare ei nolis, et post filium spiritum, Quid enim inter nos et illos nisi differentia ista? Quid opus evangelii si non exinde Pater et Filius et spiritus unum deum sistunt? Sic deus voluit novare sacramentum, ut nove unus crederetur per Filium et Spiritum, et coram jam Deus in suis propriis nominibus et personis cognosceretur, qui et retro per Filium et Spiritum predicatus non intelligebatur. Ad Praxeam, Sect. xxx. p. 518.



the divine *Logos*, they were evidently in danger of making a diversity, or a separation in the divine nature. That the common people did make this very objection to the new doctrine is clearly intimated by Tertullian "When I say that the Father is one, the Son another, and the Spirit a third, an unlearned, or perverse person, understands me as if I meant a diversity, and in this diversity he pretends that there must be a separation of the Father, Son, and Spirit\*."

The objection is certainly not ill stated. Let us now consider how this writer answers it: for at this time it was not pretended that the subject was above human comprehension, or that it could not be explained by proper comparisons. In order, therefore, to shew that the Son and Spirit might be produced from the Father, and yet not be separated from him, he says that God produced the *Logos* (*Sermonem*) as the root of a tree produces the branch, as a fountain produces the river, or the sun a beam of light †. The last of these comparisons is also adopted by Athenagoras in his Apology ‡, in which he describes a beam of light, as a thing not detached from the sun, but as flowing out of it, and back to it again. For Hierarchas had been censured for comparing the production of the Son from the Father to the lighting of one candle at another, because the second candle was a thing subsisting of itself, and intirely separated from the former so as to be incompatible with unity §.

Justin Martyr, however, as we have seen, made use of the same comparison, and as far as appears, without censure. But after his time the ideas of philosophizing christians had undergone a change. He and his contemporaries were only solicitous to make out something like divinity in the Son, without considering him as united in one substance with the Father, the unity of God being then defended on no other principle than that of the supremacy of the Father; so that,

\* Ecce enim dico alium esse patrem, et alium filium, et alium spiritum. Male accipit idiotæ quisque aut perversus hoc dictum, quasi diversitatem sonet, et ex diversitate separationem pretendat Patris, Filii, et Spiritus. Ad Praxeam, Sect. viii. p. 504. † Ad. Praxeam, cap. viii p. 504. ‡ P. 86. § See Hilary de Trinitate, lib. iv. Opera, p. 59.



though Christ might be called God in a lower sense of the word, the Father was God in a sense so much higher than that, that strictly speaking it was still true, that there was but one God, and the Father only was that God. But by the time of Hilary the philosophizing christians, finding perhaps that this account of the unity of God did not give intire satisfaction, were willing to represent the Son not only as deriving his being and his divinity from the Father, but as still inseparably united to him, and never properly detached from him; and therefore the former comparison of one torch lighted by another would no longer answer the purpose. But this could not be objected to the comparison of the root and the branch, the fountain and the stream, or the sun and the beam of light, according to the philosophy of those times. For in all these cases things were produced from the substance of their respective origins, and yet were not separated from them.

These explanations suited very well with the doctrine of the Trinity as held by the council of Nice; when it was not pretended, as it is now, that each person in the Trinity is equally eternal and uncaused. But they certainly did not sufficiently provide for the distinct personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit; which, however, especially with respect to the two former, they asserted. With respect to the latter, it is not easy to collect their opinions; for, in general, they expressed themselves as if the Spirit was only a divine power.

In order to satisfy the advocates of the proper unity of God, those who then maintained the divinity of Christ, make, upon all occasions, the most solemn protestations against the introduction of two Gods, for the deification of the Spirit was then not much objected to them. But they thought that they guarded sufficiently against the worship of two Gods, by strongly asserting the inferiority and subordination of the Son to the Father; some of them alleging one circumstance of this inferiority, and others another.

Tertullian cautions us not to destroy the monarchy when we admit a Trinity, since it is to be restored



from the Son to the Father\*. Novatus lays the stress on Christ's being begotten, and the Father not begotten. "If," says he †, "the Son had not been begotten, he and the Father, being upon a level, they would both be unbegotten, and therefore there would be two Gods, &c. Again ‡, he says, "when it is said that Moses was appointed a God to Pharoah, shall it be denied to Christ, who is a God not to Pharoah, but to the whole universe?" But this kind of divinity would not satisfy the moderns.

Eusebius's apology for this qualified divinity of Christ (for the manner in which he writes is that of an *apology*, and shews that this new doctrine was very offensive to many in his time) turns upon the same hinge with the former of these illustrations of Novatus. "If," says he §, "this makes them apprehensive lest we should seem to introduce two Gods, let them know that, though we indeed acknowledge the Son to be God, yet there is absolutely but one God, even he who alone is without original, and unbegotten, who has his divinity properly of himself, and is the cause even to the Son himself both of his being, and of his being such as he is; by whom the Son himself confesses that he lives, declaring expressly *I live by the Father*, and whom he declares to be greater than himself, and to be even his God." This, indeed, is supposed to be written by an Arian, but it is the language of all the Trinitarians of his time: for then it had not occurred to any person to say that the *one God* was the Trinity, or the Father, Son, and Spirit in conjunction, but always the Father only. The distinction between *person* and *being*, which is the salvo at present, was not then known. Some persons in opposing Sabellius, having made three *Hypostases*, which we now render *persons*, separate from each other, Dionysius bishop of Rome, quoted with approbation by Athanasius himself, said that it was making three Gods ||.

I have observed before, and may have occasion to

\* Ad Praxaem, Cap. iv. p. 502. † Cap. xxxi. p. 122.

‡ Cap. xx. p. 77.

§ Clarke on the Trinity, p. 307.

|| De Synodo Nicæna, Opera, p. 275.



repeat the observation hereafter, that in many cases, the phraseology remains when the ideas which originally suggested it have disappeared; but that the phraseology is an argument for the pre-existence of the corresponding ideas. Thus it had been the constant language of the church, from the time of the apostles, and is found upon all occasions in their writings, that *Christ suffered*; meaning, no doubt, in his *whole person*, in every thing which really entered into his constitution. This, however, was not easily reconcilable with the opinion of any portion of the divinity being a proper part of Christ; and therefore the Docetæ, who first asserted the divine origin of the Son of God, made no scruple to deny, in express words that Christ suffered. For they said that *Jesus* was one thing, and the *Christ*, or the heavenly inhabitant of *Jesus* another; and that when *Jesus* was going to be crucified, Christ left him.

Irenæus, writing against this heresy, quotes the uniform language of the scriptures as a sufficient refutation of it; maintaining that *Christ himself* in his whole nature, suffered. “It was no *impassible Christ*,” he says\*, “but *Jesus Christ himself* who suffered for us.” It is evident, however, that this writer, who was one of the first that adopted the idea of the divinity of Christ (but on a principle different from that of the Docetæ, viz. the personification of the *Logos* of the Father) could not himself strictly maintain the passibility of his whole nature; for then he must have held that something which was a proper part of the deity himself was capable of suffering. He therefore, but in a very awkward and ineffectual manner, endeavours to make a case different from that of the Docetæ, by supposing a *mixture* of the two natures in Christ.

“For this reason,” he says†, “the word of God became man, and the son of God became the Son of man, being mixed with the word of God, that receiving the adoption, he might become the son of God. For we could not receive immortality, unless we were united to immortality,” &c. Origen also,

\* Lib. iii. cap. xx. p. 246. † Ib. cap. xxi. Opera, p. 249.



in his third book against Celsus \*, speaks of the mixture of the humanity with the divinity of Christ. He even speaks of the mortal quality of the very body of Christ as changed into a divine quality.

This confusion of ideas, and inconsistency, appears to have been soon perceived. For we presently find that all those who are called *orthodox* ran into the very error of the Docetæ; maintaining, that it only was the *human nature* of Christ that suffered, while another part of his nature, which was no less essential to his being *Christ*, was incapable of suffering; and to this day all who maintain the proper divinity of Christ are in the same dilemma. They must either flatly contradict the scriptures, and say, with the Docetæ, that Christ did not suffer, or that the divine nature itself may feel pain. This being deemed manifest impiety, they generally adopt the former opinion, viz. that the human nature of Christ only suffered, and content themselves with asserting some inexplicable mixture of the two natures; notwithstanding the idea of one part of the *same person* (and of the intellectual part too) not feeling pain, while the other did, is evidently inconsistent with any idea of proper *union*, or *mixture*.

The very next writer we meet with after Irenæus, viz. Tertullian, asserts, contrary to him, that it was not Christ, but only the human nature of Christ that suffered. This voice, says he, “*My God my God why hast thou forsaken me,*” “*was from the flesh, and soul, that is, the man, and not the word, or spirit; that is, it was not of the God, who is impassible, and who left the Son while he gave up his man to death.*†” What could any of the Docetæ have said more?

Arnobius expresses himself to the same purpose. Speaking of the death of Christ, with which the christians were continually reproached. “*That death,*” says he ‡, “*which you speak of, was the death of the*

\* P. 136. † Hæc vox carnis et animæ, id est hominis, non sermonis, non spiritus, id est non dei, propterea emissæ est, ut impassibilem deum ostenderet qui sic filium dereliquit dum hominem ejus tradidit in mortem. Ad Praxeam, cap. xxx. p. 518.

‡ Adversus Gentes, lib. i. p. 22.



\* *man* that he had put on, not of himself, of the bearer.\*"

Hilary, who wrote after the council of Nice, went even farther than this, and maintained at large, that the body of Christ was at all times incapable of feeling pain, that it had no need of refreshment by meat and drink; and that he eat and drank only to shew that he had a body. "Could that hand," says he †, "which gave an ear to the man that Peter smote, feel the nail that was driven through it? and could that flesh feel a wound, which removed the pain of a wound from another?"

Later writers, indeed, did not follow Hilary in this extravagance, but Epiphanius says ‡, that Christ, in his death upon the cross, suffered nothing in his divinity. This too is the language of those who are called orthodox at this day. But how this is consistent with their doctrine of *atonement*, which supposes an infinite satisfaction to have been made to the justice of God by the death of Christ, does not easily appear.

## SECTION V.

*An Account of the Unitarians before the Council of Nice.*

BEFORE I proceed to the Arian controversy, I must take notice of those who distinguished themselves by maintaining the proper humanity of Christ in this early period. That the christian church in general held this doctrine till the time of Victor, was the constant assertion of those who professed it about this time, and I think I have shewn that this was true.

One of the first who distinguished himself by asserting the simple humanity of Christ, was Theodotus of Byzantium, who, though a tanner, is acknowledged to

\* *Mors illa quam dicitis assumpti hominis fuit, non ipsius, gestaminis, non gestantis.* † Lib. x. p. 244. ‡ *Hæc. xx. Opera*, vol. i. p. 49.



have been a man of ability, and even of learning. He is said to have been well received at Rome, and at first even by Victor the bishop of that city, who afterwards excommunicated him.

About the same time, appeared Artemon, from whom those who maintained this opinion were by some called *Artemonites*; but it appears from the writings of Tertullian, that they were more generally called *Monarchists*, from their asserting the proper unity of the divine nature, and the supremacy of God the Father with respect to Christ. By their enemies they were called *Patripassians*, because they were charged with asserting that the Father was so united to the person of Christ, as even to have suffered with him. But Lardner treats this as a calumny\*. It should seem, however, that some of them went so far (since Tertullian so particularly quotes it as their own language†) as to say that the Father felt compassion for his suffering Son. But this language might be used by them in a figurative sense, in which sense various passions are in the scriptures ascribed to God.

Beausobre‡ thinks them to have been intirely free from this imputation, and imagines it to have arisen from their adversaries, designedly or undesignedly, mixing their own ideas with theirs, and especially confounding the two terms *Logos*, and *Son of God*. In consequence of this, when the unitarians asserted that the Father and the *Logos* were one person, they would of course charge them with maintaining that the Father suffered in the Son. Indeed, Tertullian, as Beausobre observes, contradicts himself when he charges the unitarians with this opinion, because in other parts of his writings, he expressly says that they believed the Father to be *impassible*§.

Praxeas the Montanist, and a man of genius and learning, against whom Tertullian writes, was an unitarian; and so probably were many others of that sect||. For their peculiar opinions and practices, as Montanists,

\* Hist. of Heretics, p. 413. † Ad Praxeam, Sec. xxix. p. 518.  
‡ Vol. i. p. 539. § Vol. i. p. 534. || Lardner's Hist. of Heretics, p. 398.



had no relation to any particular opinion concerning the nature of Christ.

It is very evident that about this time the unitarians were very numerous in all parts of the christian world; and as they were not distinguished by having assemblies separate from those of other christians, which Mosheim allows \*, their opinion certainly could not be deemed *heretical*. It is even acknowledged that many of these unitarians (though none of their writings are now come down to us) were men of science. They are particularly said to have been addicted to geometry, and are also said to have treated questions in theology in a geometrical method; but no particulars of this kind are now known to us. It is very possible that this circumstance (which is mentioned by their adversaries by way of reproach) might have arisen from their endeavouring to shew that if the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (if this last was then considered as a distinct person) were each of them God, in any proper sense of the word, there must be more Gods than one. Such geometry as this, I doubt not, gave great offence.

In the following century, *viz.* the third, we find Noetus, Sabellius, and Paul bishop of Samosata, the most distinguished among the unitarians. Noetus was of Smyrna, and is said to have been a disciple of Artemon. Sabellius was bishop, or priest, of Cyrene in Africa, in which country the unitarian opinion, as taught by Noetus, is said to have been generally adopted. It is, indeed, said by ecclesiastical historians, that many bishops in this country were brought over to this opinion by Sabellius. But it is much more probable that they held the same opinion before. In that age the prevailing bias was to magnify the personal dignity of Christ, and not to lessen it; so that we find few or no clear instances of any who, having once maintained, that Christ was either God, or a superangelic being, and the maker of this world under God, came afterwards to believe that he was merely a man. Both Noetus and Sabellius, were charged by their adversaries with being Patripassians; but the unitarians of that age asserting, as the unitarians now do, that

\* Vol. i. p. 191.



all the divinity of the Son, was that of the Father residing in him, and acting by him, was sufficient to give a handle for that injurious representation of their opinion.

There was nothing peculiar in the doctrine of Sabellius, though he is generally charged with maintaining that there were three persons in the Trinity, but that these three *persons* or rather *characters* (*προσωπα*) were only different names or attributes, of the same person, or being. If this was a fair representation, Sabellius and his followers must have meant to disguise their unitarian sentiments in terms appropriated to the orthodoxy of their age. But though many persons are said to do this at present, Sabellius himself is not charged with it by any of his opponents. On the contrary, he is generally said to have been a disciple of Noetus. It is therefore probable, as Beausobre conjectures, that this representation arose from his adversaries misapprehending what he said concerning the Father and the Son being *one*, and concerning the *Father being in him*, and *doing the works*, as our Saviour expresses himself. At the same time Sabellius might mean nothing more than the most avowed unitarians mean by such language at this day.

Paul, bishop of Samosata, a man of genius and learning, but charged with the arrogance and ambition of other bishops of great sees in those times, made himself obnoxious by maintaining the unitarian principles, and was condemned for them in several councils held at Antioch, as well as on other accounts. His opinions are acknowledged to have spread much, and to have alarmed the orthodox greatly\*. But when we read of such persons as this bishop making many converts to the doctrine of the humanity of Christ, I cannot help suspecting, for the reason mentioned above, that it is to be understood of the numbers who were before of that opinion, being encouraged by men of their learning, ability, and influence to declare themselves more openly than they had done before; having been overborne by the philosophizing christians of that age, the current of men's opinions

\* Suet., A. D. 265.



having for some time set that way. This Paul of Samosata, is represented by Epiphanius \*, as alleging, in defence of his doctrine, the words of Moses, *the Lord thy God is one Lord*; and he is not charged by him, as others were, with maintaining that the Father suffered; and indeed from this time we hear no more of that accusation, though the tenets of the unitarians most probably continued the same.

To these we might add, as falling within the same century, Beryllus, bishop of Bosra, in Arabia, said to have been a man of learning and modesty, and to have maintained that Christ had no being before he was born of the Virgin Mary, and no divinity besides that of the Father residing in him †. But he is said to have been converted to the orthodox faith by Origen. It is to be regretted that we have no farther information concerning this bishop and other christians in Arabia. Many of them, we are told, maintained, contrary to the philosophy of their times, that the soul died with the body, and that all men would be in a state of insensibility from the time of their death to that of the general resurrection ‡.

I shall close this account of the ancient unitarians with just mentioning Photinus, bishop of Sirmium, though he flourished after the council of Nice; because he is the last of the unitarians we read of till the revival of the doctrine in the last age. For though it can hardly be supposed that the opinion of the simple humanity of Christ was wholly extinct, those who maintained it were overborne and silenced by the Trinitarians on the one hand, and the Arians on the other. And, of the two, the latter were full as hostile to them as the former. This Photinus is said to have been a man of great eloquence. He continued in his bishopric notwithstanding his being condemned in three several synods or councils, especially in one held at Milan, A. D. 345, being extremely popular in his see; but at length he was expelled by a council held at Sirmium itself in 351. This last council was called

\* Hær. lxx. Opera, vol. i. p. 608.      † Eusebii, Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. xxxiii. p. 297.      ‡ Ib. Cap. xxxvii. p. 299.



by order of the emperor Constantius, and consisted chiefly of Arian bishops.

Here I reluctantly bid adieu, to what I apprehend to be the genuine doctrine of the scriptures concerning the nature of Christ, but we shall see it reappear with growing lustre in a later period.

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## SECTION VI.

### *Of the Arian Controversy.*

THERE were several things relating to the divinity of Christ, which had not been determined by the christian Fathers, before the time of Constantine. Thus, though the term *begotten* had been generally used in speaking of the origin of the Son, by way of emanation from the Father, the term *created*, and others of a similar meaning, had been used occasionally, and as far as appears without giving offence; nor indeed could it well have done so, in an age in which all creation was considered as of the same kind; every substance (at least all intelligent substances, or spirits) being supposed to have been derived ultimately from the same divine essence. This language we find used by Lactantius, and Hilary, after it had begun to be disliked, and reprobated, and therefore it was probably used by them through inadvertence.

Lactantius, however, speaking of the origin of the Son\*, says, “as when he was created in his first spiritual birth, he was, from God alone, made a holy spirit; so in his second carnal birth, from his mother alone, he became holy flesh.” Hilary says†, “God the Father is the cause of all, without beginning, and solitary; but the Son was produced by the Father without time, and was created and founded before the ages. He was not before he was born, but he was born without time. Before all time he alone

\* Epitome, Cap. xliii. p. 114.    † Lib. iv. p. 59.



“subsists from the Father alone.” As it is not easy to give an exact translation of this passage, on account of its extreme obscurity, I shall give it at length in the note \*. This writer seems to have thought as the generality of the Antenicene Fathers did, that there was a time when Christ was not : but we shall find that after the Arian controversy this opinion was condemned.

It was in consequence of the controversy occasioned by Sabellius in Africa that the peculiar opinions of Arius were started. Sabellius having asserted that there was no difference between the divinity of the Father and that of the Son, Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, was thought to have advanced, in opposition to him, something derogatory to our Saviour, as that his divinity was so far different from that of the Father, that he was not even of the *same substance* with the Father ; which, as we have seen, was contrary to the opinion of those who were deemed orthodox in that age. However, he justified himself in such a manner as gave satisfaction.

But not long after this, Alexander, another bishop of Alexandria, being led by the same controversy to discourse concerning Christ, in the presence of Arius, a presbyter of the same church (with whom he seems to have had some previous difference) among other things in favour of the dignity of Christ, advanced that the Father did not precede the Son a single moment, and that he had issued from all eternity out of the substance of the Father himself. This, being in some respects an advance upon the generally received doctrine, provoked Arius to reply. He allowed that Christ existed before all time, and before the ages, as the only begotten Son of God, but he said that he had no being before he was begotten. He also asserted, in the course of the debate, that Christ was neither of the substance of the Father, nor formed out of pre-existing matter, but, like other things, was created out of nothing.

\* Deus Pater est causa omnium, omnino sine initio, solitarius ; filius autem sine tempore editus est a patre, et ante secula creatus et fundatus. Non erat antequam nasceretur, sed sine tempore ante omnia natus, solus a solo patre subsistit.



It seems also to have been the opinion of Arius and his followers, but was not perhaps advanced at that time, that this pre-existent spirit was the only intelligent principle belonging to Christ, being in him what the *soul* was supposed to be in other men.

The prejudices of the christians of that age against the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ must have been very general, and very strong, to have made this doctrine of Arius so popular as we find it presently was. It was a doctrine that does not appear to have been publicly maintained before. But possibly, the difficulty of conceiving how a mere *attribute* of the divine nature could become a *real person*, which had been the orthodox opinion, might have gradually led men to think that Christ had been produced by way of simple *emanation* from God, like other intelligences, or spirits. And when the scripture doctrine of the creation of all things out of nothing began to take place of the doctrine of the philosophers, who asserted the impossibility of any such creation, the opinion of Arius that Christ was made out of nothing would naturally succeed to that of his emanation from the Father; so that it is possible that the minds of the more learned christians might have been fully prepared to receive that doctrine before it was openly published by him.

Indeed, the appeal of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and other learned and eminent bishops of that age, proves that he did not imagine that he had advanced an opinion that was altogether peculiar to himself; and their ready reception of his doctrine, and the countenance which they gave him, who was only a presbyter, and had nothing extraordinary to recommend him is a stronger proof of the same thing. The Arian doctrine, however, was a kind of medium between that of the *simple humanity* of Christ, which was far from being entirely extinguished, though it was less and less relished, and that of his *proper divinity*, which made him to be of the same substance with the Father, and a kind of rival of his dignity, at which it is no wonder that the minds of many revolted. This circumstance, therefore, of the Arian doctrine



being the medium between two great extremes was alone sufficient to recommend it to many.

It is acknowledged, that Arius, in the course of the controversy, had many abettors in Egypt, where the difference first arose; and among them were many persons distinguished by their genius and learning, as well as by their rank and station in the world. Notwithstanding those advantages on the side of Arius, Alexander prevailed so far, that, in two councils, which he summoned on the occasion, Arius was deprived of his office, and excommunicated. Upon this he retired into Palestine, where he was countenanced by a great number of bishops, but more especially by Eusebius bishop of Nicomedia, one of the most distinguished of any in that age, both for his learning and moderation.

The Emperor Constantine, having endeavoured in vain to compose these differences in the religion which he had lately professed, and especially to reconcile Arius and Alexander, at length called a general council of bishops at Nice, the first which had obtained that appellation, and in this council, after much indecent wrangling, and violent debate, Arius was condemned, and banished to Illyricum, a part of the Roman empire very remote from Alexandria, where the controversy originated. But notwithstanding this condemnation, so far were the christians of that age from having any opinion of the infallibility of councils, that the doctrine of Arius triumphed both over the decrees of this celebrated assembly, and the authority of the emperor, who was afterwards induced to think better of Arius. He, therefore, recalled him from banishment, and ordered Alexander his bishop to admit him to communion. But Arius died before the order could be executed. Constantius the successor of Constantine, and also some others of the emperors, favoured the Arians, and in those reigns their doctrine was by far the most generally received throughout the Roman Empire. The bishops of that profession held many councils, and they are acknowledged to have been very full. But at length Arianism was in a great measure banished from the Roman empire by the persecutions of the emperor Theodosius, who interested



himself greatly in favour of the Trinitarian doctrine. The Arians took refuge in great numbers among the Burgundians, Goths, Vandals, and other unconquered barbarous nations, whom they were a great means of bringing over to the christian faith, and all of them, without exception, professed the Arian doctrine, till it was overpowered by the influence and authority of the bishops of Rome. The Vandals were long the support of Arianism in Africa, but it never recovered its credit after their extirpation from that province by the arms of the emperor Justinian.

So far was the council of Nice from giving general satisfaction, that Hilary, presently afterwards, complains\* of the Arians as being in all the provinces of the Roman empire; and in the next reign Arianism was very near becoming the universal doctrine of the christian church, and of course would have been deemed orthodox.

The debates occasioned by this famous council made a great revolution both in the language, and in the opinions of those who were deemed orthodox. It is the natural effect of controversy to push men as far as possible from that extreme which they wish to avoid, so as often to drive them into the opposite extreme. This was remarkably the case on this occasion; and no controversy ever interested so many persons, and those so deeply, as this did, and indeed continues to do to this day.

In order to keep quite clear of Arianism, which made Christ to be a *mere creature*, those who approved of the decrees of the council began to express themselves as Mosheim acknowledges †, in such a manner, as that they really substituted three Gods instead of one. And many of them seemed to imagine that they sufficiently maintained the unity of the Godhead, by asserting that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were each of them, of the same divine nature, as three or more men have each of them the same human nature.

This was certainly giving up the unity of the divine nature; and yet being obliged by the whole tenor of revelation to maintain the doctrine of only *one God*, in conjunction with this new doctrine of three separate

\* De Trinitate, Lib. vi. p. 99. † Vol. i. p. 296.



Gods, such a manifest inconsistency was introduced, as nothing could cover but the pretence that this doctrine of the Trinity was inexplicable by human reason. And then the word *mystery*, which had before been applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, in common with other things which were simply deemed *sacred*, began to be used in a new sense, and to signify not as before, a thing that was *secret*, and required to be explained; but something absolutely *incapable of being explained*, something that must be believed, though it could not be understood. But the whole doctrine, as it was afterwards generally professed, and as it now stands in every established christian church, was not finally settled before the composition of what is called the *Athanasian Creed*, and its reception into the offices of public worship.

When this creed was made, and by whom, is uncertain. It appeared about the end of the fifth century, and is by some ascribed to Vigilius Tapsensis\*. Though this creed contains a number of as direct contradictions as any person, the most skilled in logic, can draw up, it still keeps its ground, guarded from all human inspection, like the doctrine of transubstantiation, by this new but thin veil of *mystery*. But before I proceed to give a more particular account of this farther change in the doctrine, I must note by what steps the *Holy Spirit* came to be reckoned a distinct person in this Trinity.

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## SECTION VII.

### *Of the Doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit.*

THERE is very little in the scriptures that could give any idea of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, besides the figurative language in which our Lord speaks of the *advocate*, or *comforter*, as we render it (παράκλητος) that was to succeed him with the apostles after his ascension. But our Lord's language is, upon

\* Jortin's Remarks, vol. iv. p. 313.



many occasions, highly figurative, and it is the less extraordinary that the figure called *personification* should be made use of by him here, as the peculiar presence of the spirit of God, which was to be evinced by the power of working miracles, was to succeed in the place of a real person, *viz.* himself, and to be to his apostles what he himself had been, *viz.* their advocate, comforter, and guide.

That the apostles did not understand our Lord as speaking of a real person, at least afterwards, when they reflected upon his meaning, and saw the fulfilment of his promise, is evident from their never adopting the same language, but speaking of the Holy Spirit as of a *divine power* only. The apostle Paul expressly speaks of the spirit of God as bearing the same relation to God, that the spirit of a man bears to man, 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man which is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God.*

Besides, the writers of the New Testament always speak of the Holy Spirit as the same spirit by which the ancient prophets were inspired, which was certainly never understood by them to be any other than the Divine Being himself, enabling them, by his supernatural communications, to foretell future events.

Also, the figurative language in which the Holy Spirit and his operations, are sometimes described by them is inconsistent with the idea of his being a separate person; as being *baptized* with the spirit, being *filled* with the spirit, *quenching* the spirit, &c. in all which the idea is evidently that of a *power*, and not that of a *person*.

For these reasons I think it possible, that we should never have heard of the opinion of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, if it had not been for the form of baptism supposed, but without reason, to be given in the gospel of Matthew, where the apostles are directed to baptize *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. For though the meaning of these words, as explained by pretty early writers in the primitive church is nothing more than "baptizing into that religion which was given by the Father, by



“ means of the Son, and confirmed by miraculous power,” and this particular form of words does not appear to have been used in the age of the apostles, who seem to have baptized *in the name of Jesus* only; yet since this form did come into universal use, after forms began to be thought of importance, and in it the Father and Son were known to be real persons, it was not unnatural to suppose that the *Spirit*, being mentioned along with them, was a real person also.

It was a long time, however, before this came to be a fixed opinion, and especially an article of faith; the christian writers before and after the council of Nice generally speaking of the Holy Spirit in a manner that may be interpreted either of a *person* or of a *power*. But it is evident, that when they seem to speak of the Holy Spirit as of a person, they suppose that person to be much inferior to God; and even to Christ. Some of them might possibly suppose that the Holy Spirit was an emanation from the divine essence, and similar to the *Logos* itself; but others of them speak of the Holy Spirit as a *creature* made by Christ, by whom they supposed all other creatures to have been made.

With respect to the apostolical Fathers, their language on this subject is so much that of the scriptures; that we are not able to collect from it any peculiar or precise ideas. It is probable, therefore, that they considered the Holy Spirit as a power and not a person.

Justin Martyr, who was one of the first who supposed the *Logos* to be Christ, never says, in express words, that the Spirit is God, in any sense; and when he mentions worship as due to the Spirit, it is in the same sentence in which he speaks of it as due to angels. “Him,” says he \*, meaning God, “and the Son that came from him, and the host of other good Angels, who accompany and resemble him, together with the prophetic Spirit, we adore and venerate; in word and truth honouring them.” In another place † he says, “we place the Son in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third.” Again ‡, he places “the *Logos* in the second place, and the Spirit which moved on the water in the third.” It is not improbable but that this writer might consider the Holy Spirit as a

\* Apol. i. p. 43.

† Ib. p. 19.

‡ Ib. p. 87.



“ person, but as much inferior to the Son, as he made  
 “ the Son inferior to the Father.

Tertullian in one place evidently confounds the *Holy Spirit* with the *Logos*, and therefore it is plain that he had no idea of a proper third person in the Trinity. Speaking \* of the Spirit of God which over-shadowed the virgin Mary, he said, “ It is that Spirit which we  
 “ call the word. For the spirit is the substance of the  
 “ word, and the word the operation of the spirit, and  
 “ those two are one.” But in another place he says,  
 “ the spirit is a third after God, and the Son; as the  
 “ fruit, proceeding from the branch, is the third from  
 “ the root †.”

Origen speaks of it as a doubt whether the Holy Spirit be not a creature of the Son, since all things are said to have been made by him ‡

Novatus says §, “ that Christ is greater than the  
 “ paraclete; for the paraclete would not receive from  
 “ Christ, unless he was less than Christ.”

The author of the *Recognitions*, a spurious but an ancient work, and never charged with heresy ||, says,  
 “ that the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, is neither God,  
 “ nor the Son, but was made by him that was made,  
 “ or begotten (*factus per factum*) viz. by the Son, the  
 “ Father only being not begotten, or made.”

One reason why those Fathers who had modified their theological tenets by the principles of the heathen philosophy did not readily fall into the notion of the personality, or at least the divinity, of the Holy Spirit, might be that there was nothing like it in the philosophy of Plato, which had assisted them so much in the deification of Christ. A *third principle* was indeed sometimes mentioned by the Platonists, but this was either the soul of the world, or the material creation itself; for there are different representations of the Platonic doctrine on this subject.

At length, however, the constant usage of the form of baptism mentioned by Matthew, together with the literal interpretation of our Saviour's description of

\* Ad Praxeam, cap. xxvi. p. 515.

† Ib. cap. viii.

Opera, p. 504. ‡ In Joannem Opera, tom. ii. p. 276. § Cap. xxv.

|| Lib. iii. cap. viii.



the Holy Spirit, probably, gave most of the primitive christians an idea of its being a *person*; and the rest of the language of Scripture would naturally enough lead them to conclude that he must be a divine person. But it was a long time before these things coalesced into a regular system.

The Fathers of the council of Nice said nothing about the divinity, or the personality of the Holy Spirit; nor was it customary in the time of Basil to call the Holy Spirit God. Hilary interprets baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by the equivalent expressions of the *author*, *the only begotten*, and *the gift* \*.

That little is said concerning the separate divinity of the Spirit of God in the scriptures is evident to every body; but the reason that Epiphanius gives for it will not be easily imagined. In order to account for the apostles saying so little concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and omitting the mention of him after that of the Father and the Son; (as when Paul says, *there is one God, and Father of all, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things*) he says that “the Apostles writing by the inspiration of the Spirit, he did not chuse to introduce much commendation of himself, lest it should give us an example of commending ourselves †.”

What is most particularly remarkable is, that the Fathers of the council of Sardica, held in 347, a council called by the authority of the emperors Constance and Constantius, a hundred and sixty bishops being present, of whom Athanasius himself was one, and two hundred more approving of the decrees after they had been sent to them (a council in which it was decreed that the Father, Son, and Spirit, was *one hypostasis*, which they say the heretics call, *οὐς*, and that the Father never was without the Son, nor the Son without the Father) did not distinguish between the *Holy Spirit* and the *Logos*, any more than Tertullian did in the passage quoted above. They say “We believe in the paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord

\* De Trinitate, lib. ii. Opera, p. 22.

† Hær. lviii. Opera, vol. i. p. 485.



“ himself promised and sent. He did not suffer, but  
 “ the man which he put on, and which Christ took  
 “ from the virgin Mary, which could suffer : for man  
 “ is liable to death, but God is immortal \*.”

Basil says that “ the spirit is superior to a created  
 “ being, but the title *unbegotten* (*αγεννητος*) is what  
 “ no man can be so absurd as to presume to give to  
 “ any other than to the supreme God.” Then, speak-  
 ing of his not being begotten, like the Son, but pro-  
 ceeding from the Father ; he says “ neither let any  
 “ man think that our refusing to call the Spirit a crea-  
 “ ture is denying his personality (*υποστασις*) †.

The subject might have longer remained in this un-  
 settled state, if Macedonius an eminent Semiarian,  
 who had been expelled from the church of Constanti-  
 nople, had not expressly denied the divinity of the  
 Holy Spirit ; maintaining, as some say, that it was  
 only the Spirit or power of God ; or according to  
 others, that he was a creature like the angels, but  
 superior to them. This opinion, being much talked  
 of, had many abettors, especially in Egypt. But  
 Athanasius, who was then concealed in the deserts of  
 that country, hearing of it, wrote against it, and he  
 is said to have been the first who applied the word *con-*  
*substantial* to the Spirit, it having before been applied  
 to the Son only.

It was some time, however, before any public no-  
 tice was taken of this opinion of Macedonius ; and in  
 a council held at Lampfacum in 365, a council de-  
 manded by the catholic bishops, though the greater  
 number of those who actually met were Arians, the  
 opinion of Macedonius, as Socrates the historian ob-  
 serves, appeared to have gained more ground than  
 ever, and would probably have been the received opi-  
 nion, had it not been for the interference of an ortho-  
 dox emperor in the business.

At length, in what is called the second general  
 council, which was held at Constantinople in 381,  
 under Theodosius the great, the opinion of Macedo-  
 nius was condemned, though thirty-six of the bishops

\* Theodorit, lib. ii. cap. viii. p. 82. † Adv. Eunomium,  
 lib. iii. Opera, vol. i, p. 758.



present were in favour of it. In the creed drawn up by this council it is said, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeded from the Father, and who ought to be adored and glorified with the Father and the Son, and who spake by the prophets." This clause is now generally annexed to the Nicene creed, though no such thing had been determined at the time of that council.

Thus, at length, the great outline of the present doctrine of the Trinity was completed, though many points of less consequence still remained to be adjusted, as we shall see in the prosecution of this subject; and the doctrine of the *consubstantiality* of the Spirit with the Father and the Son, though implied, is not directly expressed in the decrees of this council.

As the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was very unpopular at first, so that of the divinity of the Holy Spirit appears to have been so too, as we may clearly infer from the writings of Basil. He speaks\* of all people being interested in the debate on the subject, and even of his own disciples, as presuming to act the part of judges in the case; asking questions not to learn, but to puzzle and confound their teachers. The argument by which he represents himself and his orthodox brethren as most frequently urged was the following: Every thing must necessarily be either *unbegotten*, *begotten*, or *created*. If the Holy Spirit be unbegotten, he must be the same with the Father, and if he be begotten he must be the Son: If therefore, he be a *person* distinct from both, he must be a creature. For the good Father's answer to this objection I must refer my reader to his twenty-seventh homily which is against the Sabellians.

I shall close this article with a short account of the word *Trinity*, and of the advantage which this doctrine gave the heathens. The first appearance of the word *Trinity* is in the writings of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, but it is not clear that by it he meant a Trinity consisting of the same persons that it was afterwards made to consist of, and certainly not a Trinity of persons in the Godhead. He says†, that the three

\*Hom. xxvii. Contra Sabellianos, vol. i. p. 528.

†Ad Autolycum, lib. ii. p. 106.



days which preceded the creation of the heavenly bodies on the fourth day, in the first chapter of Genesis, represent the sacred mystery of the Trinity, viz. "God, his word, and his wisdom." He adds, "the fourth day is the type of man, who needs light, that there may be God, the *Logos*, wisdom, and man." This passage is certainly obscure enough, and it could hardly have been imagined from it that by *wisdom* he meant the *Holy Spirit*, the third person in the modern Trinity, had not the same term been used by other writers, and especially by Tatian, who was cotemporary with Theophilus. For he also makes a Trinity of *God, his word, and his wisdom*. About the same time Irenæus mentions the same three members, though he has not the word Trinity. "There is always," says he \*, "with God his word, and wisdom, his Son, and Spirit, by whom, and in whom, he made every thing freely." After this we find the word *Trinity* in common use, but long before it was imagined that the three persons who constituted it were consubstantial, coeternal, and equal in power and glory.

Both the *term* and the *doctrine* of the Trinity occur in a piece entitled *Expositio Fidei*, ascribed to Justin Martyr; but this is evidently spurious, and of a date much later than the time of Justin. It is remarkable too that Clemens Alexandrinus, who was in the very centre of the Platonism of those days, and who did not write till after Theophilus, never uses the term but once, and then it is to denote the bond of christian graces, *faith, hope, and charity* †.

We cannot wonder that this introduction of new objects of worship by christians, should not pass unnoticed by the heathens; and as it was chiefly a wish to recommend their religion to others, that gave them their original bias towards exalting the person of Christ, they were very properly punished by the advantage which the heathens took of this very circumstance.

The *incarnation of the eternal word*, appears to have been a subject of ridicule to Celsus, who compares it to the fable of the transformations of Jupiter, in the

\* Lib. iv. cap. xxxvii. p. 330. † Strom. lib. iv. p. 495.



History of Danae, &c. He also justifies the polytheism of the heathens by the example of the christians in this respect. "If christians," says he \*, "worshipped only one God, they might have some pretence for despising all others; whereas they render these immense honours to a mere upstart." To this, Origen answers, by alleging the text, *I and my father are one*, explaining it by *all the disciples being of one heart and one mind*. But so might the heathen gods have been one.

The emperor Julian did not overlook this obvious topic of reproach to christians. He particularly upbraided them with calling Mary the *mother of God*, and charges them with contradicting Moses, who taught that there is but one God.

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## SECTION VIII.

*The History of the Doctrine of the Trinity from the Councils of Nice and Constantinople, till after the Eutychian Controversy.*

BEFORE I relate what was peculiar to those who obtained the name of *orthodox* in this controversy, I shall just mention the divisions of the Arians, which contributed much to the prejudice of their cause, as they often proceeded to great violence against each other.

The original and proper Arians held simply, that the Son was *created out of nothing*, sometime before the creation of the world, which they said was made by him. But they did not immediately attend to the proper consequences of their doctrine, but generally supposed that the nature of Christ was something *similar* to that of God. Afterwards, however, Aetius, and after him Eunomius, maintained that Christ being a *creature*, must have a nature wholly *different* from that of God, and therefore *unlike* it. From this the

\* Contra Celsum, lib. viii. p. 385.



proper Arians were termed Anomœans, Aetians, and Eunomians. The emperor Constantius was of the original Arians, but Valens was of the latter class.

In 391, we find mention of another division among the Arians, *viz.* whether the Father could be properly so called from all eternity, before he had a Son. On this frivolous question, of mere words, the Arians are said to have divided with great bitterness, so as to have formed separate assemblies. But it must be considered that the history of these divisions is only given by their enemies. Before I give any account of more modern Arianism, I shall proceed with the state of Trinitarianism after the council of Nice.

No sooner was the general outline of the doctrine of *three persons in one God* settled by the council of Nice, but the orthodox began to divide upon questions of great nicety; and human passions and interests always mixing with these debates, the different parties anathematized each other with great violence.

The first dispute was about the use of the word *hypostasis*, which we now render *person*, but which had generally been considered as very nearly synonymous with *essence* (*οὐσία*). In general the Greeks understood it in a different sense; and having in view the Sabellians, who were said to assert the identity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, said that there were *three hypostases* in the divine nature. On the other hand, the Latins, willing to oppose the Arians, who made the Son to be of a different nature from the Father, usually said that there was but *one hypostasis* in the Trinity; and we have seen that the Fathers of the council of Sardica had decided in the same manner.

This dispute terminated more happily than almost any other in the whole compass of church history. For a council being held on the subject at Alexandria, in 372, the Fathers found that they had been disputing about words, and therefore they exhorted christians not to quarrel upon the subject. Ever after, however, the phraseology of the Greeks prevailed, and the orthodox always say that there are *three hypostases*, or persons in the unity of the divine essence.\*

\* See Suicer's Thesaurus, under the word *hypostasis*.



By this happy device, and that of declaring the doctrine to be *incomprehensible*, the Trinitarians imagine that they sufficiently screen themselves from the charge of *Polytheism*, and *Idolatry*. Whereas if they did but pretend to affix any ideas to their words, they must see that the device can avail them nothing. If by *person*, or any other term which they apply to each of the three members of the Trinity, they mean *an intelligent principle*, having a real consciousness, they must, to all intents and purposes, admit *three Gods*. This was thought to be unavoidable by the council of Sardica, which therefore asserted *one* hypostasis, in agreement with the original idea of the Son being an emanation from the Father, but not separated from his essence. Whereas now the original idea, on which the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was formed, is entirely abandoned, and in reality another doctrine is received; a doctrine which all the Antenicene Fathers, who had no idea of any distinction between *hypostasis*, and *essence*, would have reprobated, as downright polytheism. The Arians, in a council held at Constantinople in 360, rejected the use of the word *hypostasis*, as applied to the Divine Being.

There seems to have been no reason why Christ should have been supposed to have had any more than one intelligent principle; and yet we have seen that some of the Antenicene Fathers thought there was in Christ a proper *human soul*, besides the *Logos*, which constituted his divinity. But perhaps they might have been reconciled to this opinion by the popular notion of dæmons possessing men, who yet had souls of their own. Or by *Anima*, which is the word that Tertulian uses, they might mean the *sensitive principle* in man, as distinct from the *Animus* or *rational principle*, a distinction which we find made by Cicero, and others.

However, after the council of Nice, and about the year 370, Apollinaris the younger, bishop of Laodicea, who had distinguished himself by taking an active part against the Arians, being attached to the principles of the platonic philosophy (according to which there are *three principles* in man, viz. his *body*, together with the *rational* and *sensitive soul*, but not more than these



three) thought that the *body*, the *sensitive principle*, and the *Logos* were sufficient to constitute Christ; and therefore he asserted that Christ had no proper human soul. In consequence of this he was charged with maintaining that the deity suffered on the cross; but whether he himself avowed this opinion does not appear. This doctrine, which was so far analagous to that of the Arians, that it supposed one intelligent principle in Christ, was well received by great numbers of christians in all the eastern provinces of the Roman empire; but it was condemned in a synod at Rome, and being likewise borne down by imperial authority, at length it became extinct.

Whiston, who was certainly well read in christian antiquity, asserts\* that Athanasius seems never to have heard of the opinion of Christ having any other soul than his divinity, and that the idea of a human and rational soul in Christ was one of the last branches of this heresy. This writer also asserts†, that there does not appear in Athanasius's treatise on the incarnation the least sign of the *hypostatical union*, or communication of properties, which he says the orthodox have been since forced to devise in support of their notions.

This business, however, was finally settled on the occasion of what is called the heresy of Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, which though small in its origin, had great consequences, the effects of it remaining to this day.

This being an age in which great compliments were paid to the virgin Mary, among other appellations it became customary to call her the *mother of God*, and this was a favourite term with the followers of Apollinaris. This phraseology Nestorius, who had distinguished himself by his opposition to the Apollinarians, declared to be improper, and said it was sufficient to call her the *mother of Christ*. To justify this, he was led to assert that there are *two distinct natures in Christ*, the divine and the human, and that Mary was the mother of the latter only.

This doctrine had many followers, and even the monks of Egypt were induced in consequence of it,

\* Collection of Records, p. 74.

† Ib. p. 75.



to discontinue their custom of calling Mary the mother of God. Cyril, then bishop of Alexandria, a man of a haughty and imperious temper, was highly offended at this; and having engaged in his interest Celestine bishop of Rome, he assembled a council at Alexandria, in 430, and in this council the opinion of Nestorius was condemned, and a severe anathema was pronounced against him.

Nestorius, not being moved by this, excommunicated Cyril in his turn. But at length Theodosius the younger called a general council at Ephesus, in 431, in which Cyril, though a party concerned, presided; and without hearing Nestorius, and during the absence of many bishops who had a right to sit in that council, he was condemned, and sent into banishment, where he ended his days.

In this factious manner was the great doctrine of the *hypostatical union* of the two natures in Christ (which has ever since been the doctrine of what is called the catholic church) established. The opinion of Nestorius, however, was zealously maintained by Barsumas bishop of Nisibis; and from this place it was spread over the East, where it continues to be the prevailing doctrine to this day. The opinion of Nestorius was also received in the famous school of Edessa, which contributed greatly to the same event.

This controversy was in fact, of considerable consequence, there being some analogy between the doctrine of Nestorius and that of the ancient unitarians, or modern Socinians; as they both maintained that Christ was a mere man. But whereas the Socinians say that the divinity of the Father resided in Christ, the Nestorians say that it was the *Logos*, or the second person in the Trinity, that resided in him.

But this union between the *Son of God* and the *son of man*, they said was not an union of *nature*, or of *person*, but only of *will and affection*; and that Christ was carefully to be distinguished from God, who dwelt in him, as in a temple. In this manner did the Nestorians, who had had several disputes among themselves, settle the matter, in several councils held at Nisibis\*.

\* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 412.



The opposition that was made to the heresy of Nestorius produced another, formed by Eutyches, abbot of a convent of monks at Constantinople, who had had a great hand in the condemnation of Nestorius. Eutyches was so far from being of the opinion of Nestorius, that he asserted that there was but *one nature* in Christ, and that was the *divine* or the *incarnate word*. Hence he was thought to deny the human nature of Christ; but he was generally supposed to mean that the human nature was *absorbed* in the divine, as a drop of honey would be absorbed, and no more distinguished if it should fall into the sea. There were other explanations and distinctions occasioned by this doctrine, which I think it not worth while to recite.

It may be proper, however, to observe, that the minds of many persons, especially in Egypt, were prepared for this opinion by another which had obtained there, and which I have observed to have been maintained by Hilary, *viz.* that the body of Christ was incorruptible, and not subject to any natural infirmity. Theodosius the Great fell into this opinion in his old age. According to this doctrine, the human nature of Christ, being of so exalted a kind, might easily be supposed to have become so in consequence of its being absorbed, as it were, in the divine; so as to partake of its properties. It was, therefore, no wonder that they should express themselves as if they considered Christ as having, in fact, but one nature \*

Eutyches was condemned by a council held at Constantinople, probably in 448, and in consequence of it was excommunicated and deposed. But he was acquitted by another council held at Ephesus, in 449. However, in a general council, called *the fourth*, held at Chalcedon, in 451, he was condemned finally, and from that time it has been the doctrine of what is called the *catholic church*, that "in Christ there are *two distinct natures*, united in *one person*, but without any "change, mixture, or confusion."

The doctrine of Eutyches continued to be professed by many notwithstanding the decrees of the council. It was almost universally received in the patriarchates

\* Saur, A. D. 563.



of Antioch and Alexandria, and it is found in the East to this day. In 535, the Eutychians divided, some of them maintaining that there were some things which Christ did not know, while others asserted that he knew every thing, even the time of the day of judgment.

By the decision of the council of Chalcedon, the modern doctrine of the *Trinity* was nearly completed, the union of the *two natures* in Christ corresponding to that of the *three persons* in the deity: and it was thought to answer many objections to the divinity of Christ from the language of the scriptures, in a better manner than the Antenicene Fathers had been able to do. These frankly acknowledged a real superiority in the Father with respect to the whole nature of Christ; but the later Trinitarians, by means of this convenient distinction of *two natures in one person*, could suppose Christ to be fully equal to the Father as *God*, at the same that he was inferior to him as *man*; to know the day of judgment as *God*, no less than the Father himself, though, at the same time, he was intirely ignorant of it considered as man.

It might seem, however, to be some objection to this scheme, that, according to it, the evangelists must have intended to speak of one *part* of Christ only, and to affirm concerning that, what was by no means true of his whole person; at the same time that their language cannot be interpreted but so as to include his whole person. For certainly it is not natural to suppose that by the word *Christ* they meant any thing less than his whole person. Much less can we suppose that our Saviour speaking concerning *himself* could mean only a *part of himself*. By means of this distinction, modern Trinitarians are able to say that the human nature of Christ only suffered, and yet its union with the divine nature (though it was so imperfect an union as to communicate no sensation to it) was sufficient to give it the same merit and efficacy as if it had been divine. To such wretched expedients, which do not deserve a serious consideration, are the advocates for this christian polytheism reduced.

Thus, to bring the whole into a short compass, the



first general council gave the Son the same nature with the Father, the second admitted the Holy Spirit into the Trinity, the third assigned to Christ a human soul in conjunction with the eternal *Logos*, the fourth settled the hypostatical union of the divine and human nature of Christ, and the fifth affirmed, that in consequence of this union, the two natures constituted only one person. It requires a pretty good memory to retain these distinctions, it being a business of *words* only, *ideas* not being concerned in it.

Before I proceed any farther, it may not be amiss to give a brief account of some other particulars relating to the Eutychian doctrine, though they were hardly heard of in this part of the world; and the opinions that were then entertained in the East are not worth reciting, except to shew into what absurdities men may fall, when they get out of the road of plain truth and common sense.

The decisions of the council of Chalcedon were condemned by those who called themselves *Monophysites*, a sect which sprung from the Eutychians. They maintained that the divinity and humanity of Christ were so united, as to constitute only *one nature*, yet without any change, confusion, or mixture of the two natures. Saying that in Christ there is one nature, but that nature is two-fold and compounded.

In the sixth century, the *Monophysites* acquired new vigour by the labours of a monk whose name was Jacob, surnamed Baradeus, or Zanzales, and who died bishop of Edessa. From him the sect of *Monophysites* now go by the name of *Jacobites* in the east. The *Monophysites* were afterwards divided into a variety of other sects; and the Armenians, who are of that denomination, are governed by a bishop of their own, and are distinguished by various rites and opinions from the other *Monophysites*.

It was long debated among the *Monophysites* whether the body of Christ was created or uncreated; and whether it was corruptible or not; and some of them maintained that though it was corruptible, it was never actually corrupted, but was preserved from corruption by the energy of the divine nature. The *Monophysites* had also many controversies concerning the sufferings of



Christ ; and among them Xenias of Hierapolis maintained that Christ suffered pain not in his nature, but by a submissive act of his will. Some of them also affirmed, that all things were known to the divine nature of Christ, but not to his human nature.

From the controversies among the Monophysites, there arose a sect called Tritheists, the chief of whom was John Ascunage, a Syrian philosopher, who imagined that in the deity there are three natures or substances, joined together by one common essence. The great defender of this opinion was John Philoponus, an Alexandrian philosopher. A third sect was that of the Damianists, so called from Damian, bishop of Alexandria. They distinguished the *divine essence* from the *three persons*, and denied that each person was God, when considered in itself, and abstractedly from the other two. But they said there was a *common divinity*, by the joint participation of which each person was God \*.

Had these subtle distinctions occurred while the Roman empire was united under one head, councils would probably have been called to decide concerning them, solemn decrees, with the usual tremendous anathemas annexed to them, would have been made, and the Athanasian creed would not then, perhaps have been the most perplexed and absurd thing imposed upon the consciences of christians.

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## SECTION IX.

### *The State of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Latin Church.*

FROM the time of the complete separation of the eastern and western empires, the Greek and Latin Churches had but little connection, and their writings being in different languages, were very little known to

\* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 473.



each other ; few of the Latins being able to read Greek, or the Greeks Latin. Though, therefore, the members of both churches were much addicted to theological discussions, they took a quite different turn, and except upon very particular occasions, did not interfere with each other.

With respect to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, there was this difference between the eastern and western churches, that as the eastern empire was under one head, and the emperor resided at Constantinople, which was the centre of all the Grecian literature, he frequently interfered with the disputes of the ecclesiastics ; in consequence of which councils were called, decrees were made, and the orthodox articles of faith immediately enforced by imperial authority. Whereas the western empire being broken into many parts, and the studious theologians dispersed in different convents all over Europe, their speculations were more free ; and though the authority of the pope preserved a kind of union among them, yet the popes of the middle ages being sovereign princes, seldom interfered with religious tenets, unless they had some apparent influence with respect to their spiritual or temporal power. This was perhaps the reason why no new councils were called, and no new decrees were made respecting the doctrine of the Trinity.

Since however, what had been determined by the first general councils was received in the West, as well as in the East, the liberty of speculating on this subject was very much confined ; so that instead of inventing doctrines materially new, divines rather confined themselves to devising new modifications, and new modes of explaining the old ones. In this field the human faculties have perhaps appeared to as great advantage as in any other, within the whole compass of speculation. We are only apt to regret that such wonderful abilities, and so much time, should have been employed on no better objects. But when, in some future period, all the labours of the mind of man shall be compared, it will, I doubt not, appear, that the studies of the *schoolmen*, to whom I am now alluding, were not without their use,



Frivolous, however, as I think the object of their inquiries were, I do not think that the world could ever boast of greater men, with respect to acuteness of speculation, than Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, especially the latter. When I only look over the contents of his *Summa*, and see the manner in which a few articles are executed (for no Protestant, I imagine, will ever think it worth his while to read many sections in that work) and consider the time in which he lived, how much he wrote besides, and the age at which he died, viz. forty-seven, I am filled with astonishment. He seems to have exhausted every subject that his own wonderful ingenuity could start, and among the rest the doctrine of the Trinity has by no means been overlooked by him.

But the first who seems to have led the way, though in a remote preceding period, to the refinements of the schoolmen in later ages, and whose authority established the principal articles of orthodoxy, so that his opinions were generally received as the standard of faith, was Austin, who flourished after the great outline of the doctrine of the Trinity was drawn in the general councils of Nice and Constantinople.

In this writer we find the doctrine of the Trinity treated in a manner considerably different from that of preceding writers. For in his time the doctrine established by the general councils had affected the *language* commonly used in treating the subject; so that words had begun to be used in senses unknown to the ancients. Thus before the council of Nice whenever the word *God* occurred in the scriptures, and the supreme God was meant by it, it had always been understood as referring to the Father only; and in this manner all the ancient Fathers explained every passage in which the word *God*, as distinguished from Christ, occurred; and they had recourse to such expedients as have been mentioned in the early period of this history, to account for the divinity of Christ, without supposing that he had any title to be comprehended under the general expression.

But in the writings of Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory



Nyssen, and Basil, in the East, and Ambrose and Austin in the West, we often find the words *God* and *Trinity* to be synonymous. They maintained that all the three persons are to be understood, though they are not expressly mentioned, and they allowed no real preogative whatever to the Father; an idea which would have staggered all the Nicene Fathers. So far was Austin from supposing that the Father was truly greater than the Son, that he says\*, “two or three of the persons are not greater than any one of them.” This, says he, “the carnal mind does not comprehend, because it can perceive nothing to be true, but with respect to things that are *created*, and cannot perceive, the *truth itself*, by which they are created.” He condemns † those who have said the Father alone is immortal, and invisible, and the blames Hilary ‡, for ascribing eternity to the Father only. He so far, however, adheres to the *language* of his predecessors, as to say §, that the Father alone is *God of God* (*ex Deo*) But by this he could not mean what the Nicene Fathers meant by it.

Austin is also bolder, and more copious, in his illustrations of the doctrine of the Trinity, by comparisons with other things; though the doctrine being farther removed from human comprehension, it was then become much less capable of being explained in that way. Among other things he finds a resemblance of the Trinity in the *memory, understanding, and will* of man ||. But then none of these powers, separately taken, constitute a man, and his other comparisons are, by his own confession, still more lame and inadequate than this.

As my readers will probably wish to see in what manner some of those texts of scripture, which are usually alleged in support of the doctrine of the Trinity were understood by this writer, I shall recite his interpretation of a few on which they have seen the comments of the earlier Fathers, that they may see, how the doctrine itself had changed in his time. He explains John xiv. 28, *My Father is greater than I*, by.

\* De Trinitate; Lib. viii. Cap. i. Opera, vol. iii. p. 346.

† Lib. ii. Cap. viii. p. 267.

§ Lib. xv. Cap. xvii. p. 463.

‡ Lib. vi. Cap. x. p. 332.

|| Lib. x. Cap. xi. p. 376.



saying\*, that "Christ having emptied himself of his former glory, and being in the form of a servant, was then less, not only than his Father, but even than himself, at the very time in which he was speaking; for he did not so take the form of a servant as to lose the form of God." He explains *Christ giving up the kingdom to God even the Father*, by saying that, the whole Trinity is intended in that expression, himself and the Holy Spirit not excluded†. His manner of explaining Mark xiii. 32, in which it is said that the Son knows not the time of the day of judgment, is still more extraordinary. For he says ‡, that by *not knowing* is to be understood his *not making others to know*. He seems to understand, Phil. iv. 6, of a perfect equality with God. And lastly he says, that by the Father and Son being *one*, we are to understand the *consubstantial unity* of the Son with the Father §. Most of these interpretations were then quite new, but now these, or such as these, are in the mouths of all Trinitarians.

After Austin we find a long period of great darkness in the western church, and in this period his credit was firmly established; so that we find him quoted as an authority, almost equal to that of the councils, and even the scriptures themselves. But the age of great refinement in speculation began about the time of Berenger, and Anselm, two of the greatest scholars of their time; and had not the former of them been unfortunately heterodox in the doctrine of the eucharist, he would have been the most celebrated for his learning and abilities of all his cotemporaries.

Anselm, though he writes with wonderful acuteness, is not systematical. He does not professedly treat of the Trinity, and indeed we find little in him that is particularly remarkable on this subject, besides an obscure intimation, that the doctrine might have been known by natural reason||. In proving the eternity of Christ, he says¶, "*Christ is the wisdom of God, and the power of God*; if, therefore, God, had ever been

\* Lib. i. Cap. vii. p. 246. 260.

† Lib. i. Cap. x. p. 250.

‡ Ib. Cap. xii. p. 253.

§ Lib. iv. Cap. ix. p. 303.

|| Ad. Rom. Cap. i. vol. ii. p. 11. ¶ Ad. Cor. Cap. i. vol. ii. p. 102.



“ without Christ, he must have been without wisdom  
 “ and without power.” And he says \*, that Christ by  
 his own power rose from the dead.” Lastly, in an-  
 swer to the question why we may not as well say there  
 are *two persons* in Christ, as *two natures*, he says †,  
 “ as in God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, are three  
 “ persons, and but one God ; so in Christ, the God-  
 “ head is one person, and the manhood another person ;  
 “ and yet these are not two persons but one person.”  
 My readers, I hope, will not be disappointed in finding  
 no great light on this subject from this learned arch-  
 bishop ; nor must he form much higher expectations  
 either from Peter Lombard, or Thomas Aquinas.

Peter Lombard has many new distinctions on the  
 subject of the Trinity, and, as an article of some curi-  
 osity, I shall recite a few things from him, as well as  
 from Thomas Aquinas, who wrote in the cen-  
 tury following, and who is abundantly more copious,  
 as well as more systematical.

Peter Lombard illustrates Austin's comparison of the  
 three persons in the Trinity, to the *memory, understand-*  
*ing* and *will* of man, by observing ‡, that they all com-  
 prehend one another. “ Thus we can say, I remem-  
 “ ber that I remember, that I understand, and that I  
 “ will ; I can also say I understand that I understand,  
 “ that I remember, and that I will ; and lastly I can say  
 “ I will that I will, understand and remember.” He  
 decides the question whether the Father begat the Son  
 willingly or unwillingly ; by saying §, that he begat  
 him *by nature* and not by *will* (*natura non voluntate*)  
 so that he retained the idea, without adopting the of-  
 fensive expression *volens*. It is something extraordinary  
 that he owns ||, that he cannot distinguish between the  
 generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit.

After asserting ¶, after Austin, that no one person in  
 the Trinity is less than the other two, or than all the  
 three ; he says, “ he that can receive this, let him re-  
 “ ceive it ; he that cannot, let him however believe  
 “ it ; and let him pray that what he believes he may

\* Ad. Rom. Cap. x. vol. ii. p. 67.      † De Incarnatione, Cap.  
 v. vol. iii. p. 39.      ‡ Lib. i. Dist. iii. p. 21.      § Lib. i. Dist.  
 vi. p. 42.      || Ib. Dist. xiii. p. 73.      ¶ Ib. Dist. xix. p. 115.



“understand.” In this, which is certainly not a little curious, this subtle writer seems to have been followed by some moderns; and the last article I shall quote from him is not less curious, though I believe none of the moderns will choose to adopt his language, which, however, is very honest. After asking why, as we say that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God, we may not say there are *three Gods*. “It is,” says he, because the scripture does not say so\*. “But neither does the scripture say that there are “three persons in the Trinity. This, however, does “not *contradict* the scripture, which says nothing “about it; whereas it would be a contradiction to “the scripture to say there are *three Gods*, because “Moses says, Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord.” As to a contradiction with respect to *reason* and *common sense*, this writer seems to have made no difficulty of it, not having thought it worth his while to take it into consideration.

I must mention another peculiarity of Peter Lombard, because it was the occasion of some controversy. He made some distinction between the *divine essence* and the *three persons in the Godhead*. But on this he was attacked in a large work by Joachim, abbot of Flora, who denied that there was any *essence*, or any thing that belonged in common to the three persons, by which their *substantial* union was taken away, and nothing but a *numerical* or *moral* union was left. This explanation was, therefore, condemned by Innocent the third, in 1215 †.

Though Thomas Aquinas writes very largely on the subject of the Trinity, he has not much that is peculiar to himself. He defines a *person* ‡ to “be an individual substance of a rational nature,” and pretends to demonstrate, *a priori*, that there must be more persons than one in the divine essence §, but not more than three ||. And lastly, after asserting that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, as well as from the Father,

\* Ib. Dist. xiii. p. 136.

† Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 134.

‡ Summa, Part i. In. xxix. Art. i. p. 70. § Summa, Qu. xxx. p. 72.

|| Ib. Qu. xxxvi. p. 80.



he says \*, that the Father and Son are but one origin (unum principium) of the Holy Spirit.

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## SECTION X.

*The History of the Doctrine of the Trinity after the Eutychian Controversy.*

THE doctrine of the Trinity, as it was ever held in the western part of the world, had now received its last improvements; and indeed continued with little alteration from the time of Austin. A few more subtleties, however, were started upon the subject, especially in the East, which require to be noticed.

In 519, some monks of Syria, at the head of whom was P. Fullo, having a dispute with one Victor, a deacon in Constantinople, whom they accused of being a Nestorian, insisted upon his saying that *one of the persons in the Trinity was crucified for us*, an expression which no Nestorian would use. They both appealed to the pope's legates, who were then at Constantinople. But though these thought the words capable of a good sense, yet since they might be suspected of the Eutychian heresy, they thought it was better not to use them. The monks not satisfied with this decision, appealed to pope Hormisdas, who condemned the expression, but his successor John approved of it. Then, finding that the expression was not generally relished they proposed to change it, and to say that the *Logos, or the word had suffered for us*; but this was also thought to favour too much of Eutychianism †. Happily this controversy ended without very serious consequences.

It has been observed that all the ancient orthodox Fathers supposed that there was a time when the Son of God was not, and that the *Logos* became a *person* immediately before the creation; having been originally nothing but an *attribute of the divine nature*. This

\* Summa, Q. xxxiii. p. 85.

† Sacer, A. D. 519.



opinion, it seems, was not quite extinct in the year 529. For we then find a decree of a synod of Vaison in France, condemning it, and the preamble shews that the opinion was pretty general. "Because," say they, "not only in the apostolical see, but also in the East, and in all Africa and Italy, heretics blasphemed, saying that the Son of God was not always with the Father, but had a beginning in time, they ordered it to be chanted in the common service, Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning." A form which has continued to be in use ever since\*.

The next controversy of which I shall give an account shews, at the same time, the subtlety of the mind of man in devising distinctions, and the impotence of power to restrain or guide it. In the seventh century the emperor Heraclius, considering the detriment which his empire received from the migration of the persecuted Nestorians, and their settlement in Persia, was very desirous of uniting the Monophysites, and thought to prevent the diversity of opinions among them by inducing them to accede to the following proposition (suggested to him, it is said, by Anastasius, the chief of the Jacobites, and who pretended to renounce Eutychianism, in order to be made bishop of Antioch) "there was in Jesus Christ, after the union of the two natures, but one will and one operation." Accordingly he published an edict in favour of this doctrine, which was called that of the *Monothelites*, in 630.

It was afterwards confirmed in a council, and for some time seemed to have the intended effect. But soon after it was the occasion of new and violent animosities, in consequence of the opposition made to it by Sophronius a monk of Palestine. He, being raised to the see of Jerusalem, was the occasion of a council being held at Constantinople in 680, which was called the *sixth general council*, in which the doctrine of the Monothelites was condemned. Notwithstanding this condemnation, this doctrine was embraced by the Mardaites, a people who inhabited Mount Libanus, and were afterwards called Maronites, from Maro their

\* Sæur.



first bishop; but in the thirteenth century they joined the church of Rome \*.

In the condemnation of this doctrine, it is remarkable that it was not stated, nor any thing opposite to it asserted; the writings only, which contained it being condemned, as containing propositions "impious, and "hurtful to the soul;" and they were therefore ordered to be exterminated and burned. It is, indeed, no wonder that those who are called orthodox with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, should be embarrassed with *two intelligent principles* in one person, in what manner soever they may imagine them to be united. If there be but one intelligent principle, or nature, there can be but one *will*, but if there be *two* intelligent principles, it is natural to expect two *wills*. But then what certainty can there be that these two wills will always coincide, and what inconvenience would there not arise from their difference?

The christian Fathers who first imagined that Christ was the *Logos* of the Father, had no dispute about the sense in which he was *the son of God*. That he was so by adoption, and not in his own nature, as immediately derived from God, had been peculiar to those who held his proper humanity. But in the eighth century, Felix de Urgela in Spain, would have introduced a distinction in this case, in fact uniting the two opinions. For he held that, with respect to his divine nature, Christ was truly and properly the Son of God, but with respect to his human nature, he was so only by adoption. But this opinion was condemned in several councils, and especially in one held by Charlemagne at Ratisbon, in 792 †.

But the most ridiculous of all opinions that was, perhaps, ever seriously maintained, and which yet proceeded from an unfeigned respect to Christ (and which I mention only to relieve my readers from their attention to things that were either of a more serious nature, or that had more serious consequences) was one that was started in the ninth century, about the manner in which Christ was born of the virgin. For

\* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 37. Suetur, A. D. 629. and 680.

† Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 100.



Paschasius Radbert, the same who was so much concerned in establishing the doctrine of transubstantiation, composed in this century an elaborate treatise, to prove that Christ was born without his mother's womb being opened, in the same manner as he supposed himself to have come into the chamber where the disciples were assembled, after the doors were shut \*.

A controversy much more serious in its consequences, as it ended in the final separation of the Greek and Latin churches, was started in the same century, about the *procession of the Holy Spirit*. In the Nicene creed, with the addition which was afterwards made to it, it is said, *I believe in the Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the Father*; and by this it was probably meant that the Holy Spirit, as a distinct person, bore a similar relation to the Father, as the source of divinity, to that which the Son, or the *Logos*, bore to him. But the scriptures expressly asserting that the Spirit was sent by the Son, or proceeded from the Son, it probably came by degrees to be imagined, that his *nature* was derived from that of the Son, as well as from that of the Father; but we hear no consequence of this, till the year 447, when the words *filioque*, were added to the creed, by the order of a synod in Spain, whence it passed into Gaul. In this state things continued till the eighth century, when the question was a good deal agitated, as appears by a council at Gentilli held in 767; and in 809 Charlemagne ordered a council to be held at Aix-la-Chapelle, in which the question concerning the Holy Spirit was discussed.

In consequence of this, the Latins, in general at least, held that the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son; and in the churches of France and Spain the creed was usually read in this manner, *I believe in the Holy Spirit, which from all eternity proceeded from the Father and the Son*. This, however, was not the practice at Rome, and Leo the third, at least for some time, ordered the creed to be read as formerly. At length the Greeks took offence at this, and Photius bishop of Constantinople wrote against it, as an innovation; and after much debating on the subject, in

\* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 162.



the year 1054, the two churches finally separated, and excommunicated one another on account of this difference.

When an attempt was made to reunite the two churches, at the council of Ferrara in 1439, this procession of the Holy Spirit was thus explained, *viz.* "The Holy Spirit is eternally from the Father and the Son, and he proceeds from them both eternally, as from a single principle, and by one single procession \*." If my readers have any ideas from these words, it is more than I can pretend to.

No people in the world were so much addicted to religious controversy as the Greeks. In the latter period of that empire, notwithstanding the declining state of their affairs, and the perpetual inroads first of the Saracens, and then of the Turks, it continued to be one of their most serious occupations; and some of the emperors themselves entered into these debates, with as much eagerness as any mere divines. One of the most extraordinary instances of this occurs in the twelfth century, when a warm contest arose at Constantinople about the sense of these words of Christ, *My father is greater than I.* The emperor Emanuel Comnenus held a council upon it, in which he obtruded his own sense of them, which was that they related to "the flesh which was hid in Christ, and which was subject to suffering." He not only caused this decision to be engraven on a table of stone, in the principal church of Constantinople; but by a public edict capital punishments were denounced against all such as should presume to oppose this explanation, or teach any doctrine repugnant to it †. However, the following emperor Andronicus cancelled the edict, and did every thing in his power to put an end to the contest. But whether the severe penalties which he enacted against those who engaged in them had the effect he intended, we are not told. His measures do not seem to have been better adapted to gain his end than those of his predecessors.

I shall close the account of these idle disputes, with

\* Histoire des Papes, vol. iv. p. 124.

† Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 435.



mentioning one that was started in Barcelona in 1351, concerning the kind of worship that was to be paid to the *blood of Christ*, and which was revived at Brixen in 1462, when Jacobus de Marchia, a celebrated Franciscan, maintained publicly, that the blood which Christ shed upon the cross did not belong to the divine nature, and could not be the object of divine worship. But the Dominicans opposed this doctrine, and appealed to Pius II. who contrived to put off the decision, so that the question remains undetermined in the church of Rome to this day \*.

Lastly, to conclude this section, I must observe, that about the tenth century, a festival began to be held in honour of the *Holy Trinity*, in some cathedrals, and in monasteries, and that John XXII. who distinguished himself so much by his opinion concerning the beatific vision, fixed the office for it in 1334, and appointed the celebration of it to be on the first Sunday after Pentecost; and accordingly on this day it has been kept by the church of Rome, and the church of England ever since.

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## SECTION XI.

*A general View of the Recovery of the genuine Doctrine of Christianity concerning the Nature of Christ.*

WE are not able to trace the doctrine of the proper *humanity of Christ* much later than the council of Nice; the Arian doctrine having been much more prevalent for a considerable time afterwards, especially by the influence of the emperors Constantius and Valens; and the Arians were no less hostile to this primitive doctrine than the Trinitarians themselves. At length, though all the northern nations that embraced christianity were at first of the Arian persuasion, yet, chiefly by the influence of the popes, they became gradually

\* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 270.



Trinitarians, and continued so till near the reformation.

The first traces that we perceive of the revival of the ancient doctrine are among the Albigenſes. For I cannot ſay that I perceive any among the proper Waldenſes, and the Albigenſes were probably rather Arians than what we now call Socinians. It would ſeem, however, that if the Waldenſes (the firſt reformers from popery, and who may be traced as far as the time of Claudius biſhop of Turin) were Trinitarians, they did not originally lay much ſtreſs on that doctrine. For in their confeſſion of faith, compoſed in 1120, which was ſixty or ſeventy years before Valdo of Lyons, there is nothing under the article of *Jeſus* concerning his divinity, nor yet in that of 1544, which was preſented to the king of France. In theſe it was only ſaid that “Chriſt was promiſed to the Fathers, and “was to make ſatisfaction for ſin\*.” But after the time of the reformation by Luther, the Waldenſes, in a confeſſion of faith preſented to the King of Bohemia, in 1535, acknowledge expreſsly “one “eſſence of divinity in three perſons, according to the “Nicene creed and that of Athanaſius,” both of which they mention †.

But no ſooner were the minds of men at full liberty to ſpeculate concerning the doctrines of chriſtianity, and circumſtances excited them to it, but, while Luther and Calvin retained the commonly received opinion with reſpect to Chriſt, there were many others of that age who revived the primitive doctrine, though there were Arians among them. The greater number, however, were of thoſe who were afterwards called Socinians, from Faustus Socinus, who diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his writings among thoſe of them who ſettled in Poland, where they had many churches, and continued in a flouriſhing ſtate till the year 1658, when they were, with great cruelty and injuſtice, baniſhed from that country. This event, however, like others of a ſimilar nature, contributed to the ſpreading of their doctrine in other countries.

In England this doctrine appears to have had many advocates about the time of the civil war, the moſt diſ-

\* Leger's *Histoire*, p. 94. 109.

† *Ib.* p. 97.



tinguished of whom were the truly learned and pious Mr. Biddle, and his patron the most excellent Mr. Firmin; and it does not appear that there were many, if any, Arians among them, the term *unitarian* being then synonymous to what is now called *Socinian*. Afterwards, however, chiefly by the influence of Mr. Whiston and Dr. Clarke in the established church, and of Mr. Emlyn and Mr. Pierce among the dissenters, the Arians became so much the more numerous body, that the old unitarians were in a manner extinct. But of late years, Dr. Lardner and others having written in favour of the simple humanity of Christ, this doctrine has spread very much, and seems now to be the prevailing opinion among those who have distinguished themselves by their freedom of thinking in matters of religion. This has been more especially the case since the application made to parliament by some members of the church of England for relief in the business of subscription, and more particularly so since the erection of the *unitarian chapel* by Mr. Lindsey (who from a principle of conscience, on this ground only, voluntarily resigned his preferment in the church of England) and the publication of his *Apology*, with its *Sequel*, and other excellent works, in vindication of his conduct and opinion.

It is something extraordinary, that the Socinians in Poland thought it their duty as christians, and indeed essential to christianity, to pray to Jesus Christ, notwithstanding they believed him to be a mere man, whose presence with them, and whose knowledge of their situation, they could not therefore be assured of; and though they had no authority whatever, in the scriptures for so doing, nor indeed in the practice of the primitive church till near the time of the council of Nice. Socinus himself was of this opinion, and is thought to have given too much of his countenance to the imprisonment and other hardships, which F. Davides suffered for opposing it. However, the famous Simon Budæus was also of those who denied that any kind of worship ought to be paid to Jesus Christ, contrary to the opinion of Socinus\*.

Many of those who went by the name of Anabaptists at the beginning of the reformation, held the doc-

\* Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 199.



trine of the simple humanity of Christ; insomuch that before the time of Socinus, they generally went by that name. Among these, one of the first was Lewis Hetzer, who appeared in 1524, and who was put to death three years after at Constance\*.

Several of the Socinians of that age held the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit, considering him as a being of a super-angelic order. Of this opinion was Mr. Biddle.

The first Arians in England were of the opinion of the original Arians, viz. that Christ was the first of all creatures, and even existed from eternity, by an eternal derivation from his eternal Father, that he was the immediate maker of the world, and of all things visible and invisible, and appeared in a divine character to the patriarchs and prophets before he was born of the virgin Mary. But, besides that this doctrine favours of that of the pre-existence of all human souls, a doctrine which has no countenance in reason or revelation (though it was generally held by philosophers at the time that the Trinitarian and Arian doctrines were broached, and indeed served as a necessary foundation for them) it has staggered many, when they reflect coolly upon the subject, to think that so exalted a being as this, an *unique* in the creation, a being next in dignity and intelligence to God himself, possessed of powers absolutely incomprehensible by us, should inhabit this particular spot in the universe, in preference to any other in the whole extent of perhaps a boundless creation.

— It cannot, also, but be thought a little extraordinary, that there should be no trace of the apostles having ever regarded their master in this high light. For, being Jews, they would certainly consider him *at first* as a man like themselves, since no Jew ever expected any other for their Messiah. Indeed, it can never be thought that Peter and others would have made so free with our Lord, as they sometimes did, if they had considered him as their *maker*, and the being who supported the whole universe; and there-

\* Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 183.



fore must have been present in every part of the creation, giving his attention to every thing, and exerting his power upon every thing, at the same time that he was familiarly conversing with them. Moreover, the history of the *temptation*, whether it be supposed to be a reality, or a vision, must be altogether improbable on such a supposition. For what could be the offer of the kingdoms of this world, supposing *all* of them, without exception, to have been intended, to him who made the world, and was already in possession of it. And there is no trace of the apostles; after their supernatural illumination, discovering the great mistake they had been under with respect to this subject. On the contrary, they continued to speak as if their former ideas of him had been just, never giving him any higher title than that of *a man approved of God, &c.*

If it be supposed that while Christ was on earth he ceased to discharge the high office he held before, viz. *supporting all things by the word of his power*, there will be some difficulty in supposing *how*, and *by whom*, it was performed in that interval. For certainly it would not have been delegated to Christ, or any other created being if there had not been some impropriety in its being done immediately by God himself. That our Lord had a knowledge of the rank he held before he came into the world, must, I think, be allowed by all Arians, if they give any attention to many circumstances in gospel history, especially to our Lord's praying for the *glory which he had with the Father, before the foundation of the world*, which all Arians suppose to refer to his pre-existent state.

For, these, I suppose, and other reasons which might be alleged, a middle opinion has been adopted by some Arians. For they consider Christ merely as a pre-existent Spirit, but one who never had any business out of this world, and had no concern in making it; nor do all of them suppose that Christ was even the medium of divine communications to the patriarchs, &c. But then they do not seem to consider that many of the texts which, when interpreted literally, refer to the pre-existence of Christ, refer also, by the same mode



of interpretation, to his being the maker of the world, &c. &c. so that if these texts do not prove both these particulars, they prove neither of them. If those texts which seem to speak of *both* these circumstances, *viz.* the pre-existence of Christ, and his making of the world, will admit of some *other* construction, much more may those which seem to refer to his pre-existence only.

Besides, if we once give up the idea of Christ having been the maker of the world, and content ourselves with supposing him to have been a being of a much more limited capacity, why may we not be satisfied with supposing him to have been a *mere man*? The purposes of his mission certainly could not require more. For it cannot be said that any thing is ascribed to him, that a mere man (aided, as he himself says he was, by the power of God, his Father) was not equal to. And in other respects there seems to be a peculiar propriety in a man like ourselves being employed on such a commission as that of Christ, with respect to *man*; as his being an example to us, and especially in his resurrection being the resurrection of a man like ourselves, and therefore a more proper pattern of our own, and consequently a greater encouragement to us to look for the same. So that all the advantages of the Socinian hypothesis (and it cannot be denied to have some) are abandoned, and yet the peculiar ones of the original Arian hypothesis are not preserved, in the more qualified one, while no new advantage can be claimed by it. For all that can be said in its favour is, that the mind does not revolt at it quite so much, as at the original hypothesis.

With respect to the Trinitarians of the present age, and especially with us in England, those who have written on the subject are far from being agreed in their opinions, and therefore ought to be classed very differently from one another. But as they can agree in using the same phraseology, and mankind in general look no farther, they pass uncensured, and the emoluments of the establishment are equally accessible to them all. They are all, however, reducible to two classes, *viz.* that of those who, if they were inge-



nuous, would rank with Socinians, believing that there is no proper divinity in Christ, besides that of the Father : or else with Tritheists, holding three equal and distinct Gods. For, it cannot be pretended that the word *being*, and *persons*, have any definable difference in their corresponding ideas, when applied to this subject.

The generality of the more strict Trinitarians, make three proper distinct persons, in the Trinity, independent of each other, which is nothing less than making three distinct Gods. Mr. Howe would have helped out this hypothesis by supposing a mutual *self-consciousness* among them. But this is equally arbitrary and ineffectual ; since three perfectly distinct intelligent beings still remain. For supposing a proper self-consciousness to be communicated to *three men*, this circumstance could never be imagined to make them *one man*.

Bishops Pearson and Bull, were of opinion, that “ God the Father is the sole fountain of deity, the whole divine nature being communicated from him to the Son and Spirit, yet so that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not separate or separable from the divinity; but still exist in it \*.” But this *union* is a mere hypothetical thing, of which we can neither have *evidence* nor *ideas*. If the Father be the sole fountain of deity, he only is *God*, in the proper sense of the word, and the two others can be nothing but *creatures*, whether they exist *in* the deity (of which also we have no idea) or *out* of him.

Dr. Wallis thought the distinction of these three persons was only *modal* ; which seems, says Dr. Doddridge, to have been Tillotson’s opinion also. If so, they were both of them nothing more than Sabellians, whom all the ancients classed with unitarians.

In the same class also ought to be ranked Dr. Thomas Burnett, who maintained “ one self-existent and two dependent beings, but asserted that the two latter are so united to, and inhabited by the former, that, by virtue of that union, divine perfections

\* Doddridge’s Lectures, p. 403.



“ may be ascribed, and divine worship paid to them \*.” This, too, was evidently the opinion of Dr. Doddridge himself, and probably that of a great number of those who were educated under him, and perhaps also that of Dr. Watts. But, in fact, this scheme only enables persons to use the language, and to enjoy the reputation of orthodoxy, when they have no just title to either. For the divinity of the Father *dwelling in*, or ever so intimately *united to*, what is confessed to be a *creature*, is still no other than the divinity of the Father in that creature, and by no means any proper divinity of its own.

Besides, whatever we may fancy we can do by *words*, which are arbitrary things, and which we can twist and vary as we please, the properties and prerogatives of divinity *cannot* be communicated. The Divine Being cannot give his own supremacy, and whatever he can *give*, he must have a power of *withdrawing*, so that if he should communicate any extraordinary powers to *Christ*, or to the *Holy Spirit* (supposing this to have been a distinct being) he can, whenever he pleases, withdraw those powers; and for the same reason, as he voluntarily gave them their *being*, he must have a power of taking away *that* also. How then can they make two parts of a proper *Trinity in the divine nature*, and be said to be *equal in power and glory* with the Father?

Christians should be ashamed of such unworthy subterfuges as these. The most fearless integrity, and the truest simplicity of language, become Christians, who wish to know, and to propagate truth. Certainly, if men be *deceived*, they are not *instructed*. All that we can gain by ambiguous language is to make our readers, or hearers, imagine that we think as they do. But this is so far from disposing them to change their opinions, or to lay aside their prejudices, that it can only tend to confirm them. As to any inconveniences that we may bring upon ourselves by an undisguised avowal of whatever we apprehend to be *the truth*; we may assure ourselves, that the *God of truth*, whom we honour by our conduct, will reward us, at

\* Doddridge, p. 402.



least with that *inward peace of mind*, which can never be enjoyed by those who so miserably prevaricate in a business of such moment as this. And what are all the honours and emoluments of this world, without that satisfaction of mind?

Light having thus, at length sprung up in the christian world, after so long a season of darkness, it will, I doubt not, increase to *the perfect day*. The great article of the *unity of God* will, in time, be uniformly professed by all who bear the christian name; and then, but not before, may we hope and expect, that, being also freed from other corruptions and embarrassments, it will recommend itself to the acceptance of Jews and Mahometans, and become the religion of the whole world. But so long as christians in general are chargeable with this fundamental error, of worshipping more Gods than one, Jews and Mahometans will always hold their religion in abhorrence. As, therefore, we wish to see the general spread of the gospel, we should exert ourselves to restore it to its pristine purity in this respect.



THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
Corruptions of Christianity.

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PART II.

*The History of Opinions relating to the Doctrine of  
Atonement.*

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THE INTRODUCTION.

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As the doctrine of the *divine unity* was infringed by the introduction of that of the divinity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit (as a person distinct from the Father) so the doctrine of the *natural placability of the divine being*, and our ideas of the equity of his government, have been greatly debased by the gradual introduction of the modern doctrine of *atonement*, which represents the Divine Being as withholding his mercy from the truly penitent, till a full satisfaction be made to his justice; and for that purpose, as substituting his own innocent Son in the place of sinful men.

This corruption of the genuine doctrine of revelation is connected with the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; because it is said, that sin, as an offence against an *infinite being*, requires an *infinite satisfaction*, which can only be made by an *infinite person*, that is, one who is no less than God himself. Christ, therefore, in order to make this infinite satisfaction for the sins of men, must himself be God equal to the Father. The justice of God being now fully satisfied by the death of Christ, the sinner is acquitted. Moreover, as the sins of men have been thus imputed to Christ, his righte-



ousness is, on the other hand, imputed to them: and thus they are accepted of God, not on account of what they have done themselves, but for what Christ had done for them.

As I conceive this doctrine to be a gross misrepresentation of the character and moral government of God, and to affect many other articles in the scheme of christianity, greatly disfiguring and depraving it; I shall shew, in a fuller manner than I mean to do with respect to any other corruption of christianity, that it has no countenance whatever in reason, or the scriptures; and therefore that the whole doctrine of *atonement*, with every modification of it, has been a departure from the primitive and genuine doctrine of christianity.

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## SECTION I.

*That Christ did not die to make Satisfaction for the Sins of Men.*

IT is hardly possible not to suspect the truth of this doctrine of *atonement*, when we consider that the general *maxims* to which it may reduced, are no where laid down or asserted, in the scriptures, but others quite contrary to them.

It is usual with the sacred writers, both of the Old and New Testament, to assign the reasons of such of the divine proceedings respecting the human race, as are more difficult to be comprehended, and the necessity and propriety of which are not very obvious, and might be liable to be called in question. Such is the divine condescension, to the weakness, short-sightedness, and even the perverseness of men. He is willing that we should be satisfied that *all his ways are equal*, that they are all just, reasonable, and expedient, even in cases where our concern in them is not very apparent. Much more, then, might we expect an ex-



planation of the divine measures, when the very end which is answered by them is lost if we do not enter into the reasons of them, as is evidently the case with respect to the doctrine of atonement; since the proper end of the measures which this opinion represents the Divine being to have taken was the *display of his justice*, and of his *abhorrence of sin*, to the subjects of his government.

Is it not surprising then, that, in all the books of scripture, we no where find the *principle* on which the doctrine of atonement is founded. For though the sacred writers often speak of the malignant nature of sin, they never go a single step farther, and assert, that “it is of so heinous a nature, that God cannot pardon it without an adequate satisfaction being made to his justice, and the honour of his laws and government.” Nay, the contrary sentiment occurs every where, viz. that repentance and a good life are, *of themselves*, sufficient to recommend us to the divine favour. Notwithstanding so many notorious sinners, particular persons, and whole nations, are addressed by inspired persons, and their conduct strongly remonstrated against in the course of the sacred history, none of them are ever directed to any thing farther than their own hearts and lives. “Return unto me, and I will return unto you,” is the substance of all they say upon these occasions.

Certainly, then, we ought to suspend our assent to a doctrine of this important nature, which no person can pretend to deduce except by way of *inference* from particular expressions, which have much the air of figure and allusion. On the other hand, it seems natural to explain a few obscure expressions and passages, by other numerous, plain and striking texts, relating to the same subject; and these uniformly represent God as our universal parent, pardoning sinners *freely*, that is, from his natural goodness and mercy, whenever they truly repent and reform their lives.

All the declarations of divine mercy are made without reserve or limitation to the truly penitent, through all the books of scripture, without the most distant hint of any regard being had to the sufferings or merit of



any being whatever. It is needless to quote many examples of this. One only, and that almost the first that occurs, may suffice. It is the declaration that God made of his character to Moses, presently after the Israelites had sinned in making the golden calf. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." In the New Testament also we are said to be *justified freely by the grace of God*. Rom. iii. 24. Tit. iii. 7. Now, certainly, if the favour had been procured by the suffering of another person, it could not have been said to be bestowed *freely*.

Agreeably to this, David, and other pious persons in the Old Testament, in their penitential addresses to the Divine Being, never plead any thing more than their own repentance, and the free mercy of God. Thus David, Ps. xxv. 6. "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindness, for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord."

If the doctrine of atonement be true, it cannot, however, be pretended that David, or any other pious person in the Old Testament, was at all acquainted with it; and therefore the *belief* of it cannot be necessary to salvation, or indeed of much consequence. Had this doctrine on which so much stress is now laid, been true, we should have expected that Job, David, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, and Daniel, should have been reproved whenever they presumed to mention their integrity before God, and took refuge in his mercy only, without interposing the sufferings or merits of the Messiah to mediate for them. Also, some strong clauses should have been annexed to the absolute and unlimited declarations of the divine mercy that are so frequent in the Old Testament, which would have restrained and fixed their meaning, in order to prevent the dangerous constructions to which they are now too much open.



Indeed, admitting the popular doctrine of atonement, the whole of the Old Testament is, throughout, a most unaccountable book, and the religion it exhibits is defective in the most essential article. Also the Jews in our Saviour's time had certainly no idea of this doctrine. If they had, they would have expected a suffering and not a triumphant Messiah.

With respect to forgiveness of injuries, the Divine Being, always proposes his own conduct to our imitation; and in the Lord's prayer we are required "to forgive others, as we hope to be forgiven ourselves." Now it is certainly required of us, that if our brother only *repent*, we shall forgive him, even though he should repeat his offence seven times a day. Luke xvii. 4. On the same generous maxim, therefore, we cannot but conclude that the Divine Being acts towards us.

The parables, by which our Lord represents the forgiving mercy of God, are the farthest possible from being calculated to give us an idea of his requiring anything more than merely repentance on the part of the offender. What else can we infer from the parable of the prodigal son, or the master whose servant owed him a thousand talents, &c.

If our Lord had considered the Jews as having lost sight of the fundamental principle of their religion, he would certainly have pointed it out to them, and have drawn their attention to it. If, therefore, the proper end of his coming into the world had been to make satisfaction to the justice of God by his death (which certainly they who did not expect a suffering Messiah could have no idea of) he would have taken some opportunity of explaining it to them. But nothing of this kind occurs in the whole course of his preaching; and though he frequently speaks of his death, it is never as having had such an end.

Our Lord speaks of repentance, of good works, and of the mercy of God in the very same strain with that of Moses and the prophets, and without giving any intimation that their doctrine was defective on those heads. In his account of the proceedings of the day of judgment, the righteous are represented as thinking



humbly of themselves, but they never refer themselves to the sufferings or merit of their judge, as the ground of their hopes; though nothing can be conceived to have been more natural, and pertinent on the occasion.

Whenever our Lord speaks of the *object of his mission*, and death, as he often does, it is either in a more general way, as for the salvation of the world, to do the will of God, to fulfil the scripture prophecies, &c. or more particularly to give the fullest proof of his mission by his resurrection from the dead, and an assurance of a similar resurrection of all his followers. He also compares his being raised upon the cross to the elevation of the serpent in the wilderness, and to seed buried in the ground, as necessary to its future increase. But all these representations are quite foreign to any thing in the doctrine of atonement.

When our Lord takes so much pains to reconcile the apostles to his death, in several discourses, of which we have a particular account in the gospel of John, he never tells them that he must die in order to procure the pardon of their sins; nor do we find the least hint of it in his solemn intercessory prayer before his death. On the contrary, he speaks of their sufferings and death in the same light as his own. To James and John he says, *ye shall, indeed, be baptized with my baptism, and drink of the cup which I drink of*, Mark x. 38. And he recommends his own example to them, in laying down his life for them, John xv. 12.

After he is risen from the dead, he keeps the same profound silence on the subject of the supposed true and only great cause of his death; and as little do we find of it in the history of the book of Acts, after the minds of the apostles were fully illuminated with the knowledge of the gospel. They only “call upon all  
“men every where to repent and believe the gospel,  
“for the remission of their sins.”

The apostle Peter, in his discourse to the Jews, immediately after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and again in the temple, upon the cure of the impotent man, paints in the blackest colours the sin of the Jews



in crucifying our Lord ; but though he exhorts them to repentance, he says not one word of *satisfaction*, *expiation*, or *atonement*, to allay any apprehension they might have of the divine justice. And a fairer opportunity he could not have wished to introduce the subject. How fine a turn might he have then given to the popular cry of the same nation, at the time of our Lord's crucifixion, *His blood be on us and on our children*. Instead of this, he only exhorts them to repent, and to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, for the remission of their sins. What he says concerning the death of Christ, is, only that *he was delivered to them by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, and that with wicked hands they had put him to death*. Acts ii. 23. iii. 17.

Stephen, in his long speech at his trial, makes frequent mention of the death of Christ, but he says not one word of his being a propitiation for sin, to lead his hearers to consider it in that light.

What could have been a fairer opportunity for introducing the doctrine of satisfaction for sin by the death of Christ, than the evangelist Philip had, when he was explaining to the eunuch the only prophecy in the Old Testament which can be construed to represent it in that light ; and yet in the whole story, which is not a very concise one, there is no mention of it. And when the eunuch declares his faith, which gave him a right to christian baptism, it is simply this, that " Jesus is the Son of God."

The apostle Peter, preaching to Cornelius, the first of the proper Gentile converts, is still silent about this fundamental article of the christian faith. Much he says of Jesus Christ, that *God anointed him with the Holy Spirit, and with power, that he went about doing good, &c.* He also speaks of his death and resurrection, but nothing at all of our good works being accepted through his sufferings or merit. On the contrary, what he says upon the occasion, may, without any forced construction, be turned against this favourite opinion. *Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but that, in every nation, he*



*that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.* Acts x. 34.

The apostle Paul before the Jews at Antioch, Acts xiii. 28, at Thessalonica, ch. xvii. before Agrippa, ch. xxvi. and at Rome, ch. xxviii. on all these occasions, treats, and sometimes pretty largely, concerning the death of Christ; but never with any other view than as an event that was foretold by the prophets. He shews the Jews the aggravation of their sins, and exhorts them to repentance and to faith in Christ, but nothing farther. In his preaching to heathens at Lystra, Acts xiv. and at Athens, ch. xvii. he discourses concerning the supremacy and goodness of the one living and true God; and exhorts them to turn from their lying vanities, for that though "at the times of their former ignorance God had winked, he now commands all men every where to repent; because he has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." Now in all this, there is not one word of the true gospel scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, according to some. There is nothing evangelical; all is legal and carnal.

When we find the apostles to be absolutely silent, where we cannot but think there was the greatest occasion to open themselves freely concerning the doctrine of atonement; when, in their most serious discourses they make use of language that really sets it aside; when they never once directly assert the necessity of any satisfaction for sin, or the insufficiency of our good works alone to entitle us to the favour of God and future happiness, must we build so an important article of faith on mere *hints* and *inferences* from their writings? The doctrine is of too much importance to stand on such a foundation.

It has been pretended, that the apprehension of some farther satisfaction being made to divine justice, besides repentance and reformation, is necessary to allay the fears of sincere penitents. They would else, it is said, be subject to perpetual alarms, lest all they could



do would be ineffectual to restore them to the divine favour. But till clear instances be produced of persons actually distressed with these fears and doubts, I can treat this case as no other than an imaginary one.

In fact, there is no reason to believe that any of the human race, if they be left to their own natural unperturbed apprehension of things, will ever fall into such doubts and uncertainties as all mankind are sometimes represented to be involved in. On the contrary, that God is a merciful Being seems to have been a favourite opinion of all mankind in all ages; except in some religious systems in which the object of worship was not the true God, but some being of a low and revengeful nature, like the most capricious and depraved of mankind.

We have seen in the Old Testament, that the Jews had never any other idea than that God was placable on repentance. We find no other sentiment in Job, or his friends, and certainly no other among the Ninevites, or among the Jews of later ages, as the books of Apocrypha, Philo, Josephus, and all their later writings, testify. We also see nothing of any other opinion in the doctrine of the Hindoos, or other oriental nations.

It is remarkable, that Dr. Clarke, when, like others before him, he represents all mankind as absolutely at a loss on what terms God would receive offenders into his favour, produces not so much as a single *fact* or *quotation*, in support of what he asserts, though he is known to be peculiarly happy in his choice of the most pertinent ones on all other occasions. He gives us, indeed, a general reference to *Plato's Alcibiades the second*; but I do not find, in all the conversation between Socrates and Alcibiades in that dialogue, that either of them drops the least hint of their uncertainty about the divine favour in case of sincerity, or the least doubt that human virtue is not, *of itself*, a sufficient recommendation to his acceptance. All that they appear to be at a loss about is for some one to teach them what to pray for, lest, through their ignorance, they should ask of the Gods things hurtful to themselves. They express no want of any person to intercede with



God for them, or one whose sufferings or merit, might avail with God for their acceptance.

Besides, if men should have any doubt concerning the divine placability, I do not see that they must therefore imagine that he would accept the sufferings of *another* instead of *theirs*; but rather, that he would be absolutely inexorable, and rigorous, in exacting of *themselves* the punishment of their crimes. Fears of this kind it is very possible that men may have entertained, but then there is nothing in the doctrine of atonement that is calculated to allay such fears. But the divine declarations concerning his own placability, which abound in the scriptures, must be sufficient to answer every purpose of that kind.

It is urged, however, in favour of the doctrine of atonement, that the scheme is absolutely necessary in the moral government of God, because that, on different principles, no satisfaction is made to his offended justice. But I answer, it becomes us ever to bear in mind that the divine justice is not a blind principle, which, upon provocation, craves satisfaction indiscriminately, of all that come within its reach, or that throw themselves in its way. In the Deity, *justice* can be nothing more than a modification of *goodness*, or *benevolence*, which is his sole governing principle, the object and end of which is the happiness of his creatures and subjects. This happiness being of a moral nature, must be chiefly promoted by such a constitution of the moral government we are under, as shall afford the most effectual motives to induce men to regulate their lives well. Every degree of severity therefore, that is so circumstanced as not to have this tendency, viz. to promote repentance and the practice of virtue, must be inconsistent with the fundamental principle of the moral government of God, and even with justice itself, if it have the same end with divine goodness, the happiness of God's creatures.

Now, that any severity is necessary to be exercised on such offenders as are truly penitent, even in human governments, is owing to the imperfection of government when administered by men. For were magistrates judges of the hearts of men, there would result no



manner of inconvenience from pardoning all offenders who were become truly penitent and reformed; since hereby the offenders themselves would become useful members of society, and the penetration of the magistrates would effectually prevent any persons from taking advantage of such lenity.

This is exactly the case in the moral government of an all-seeing God. Here, therefore, measures formed upon the justest principles of equity may be taken, without hazarding the ends of government, measures which might be pernicious in any human administration. In the all-perfect government of God, therefore, there is no occasion to exercise any severity, even on penitents themselves. How absurd then it would be to exercise it on *others*, which yet the doctrine of atonement supposes. Certainly, then, it must give the mind unfavourable impressions of the divine government, which, if not corrected by something else, must have an unfriendly aspect upon their virtue. Yet, notwithstanding this, the influence which the doctrine of atonement has upon *practice* is strongly urged in its favour.

Admitting, however, that the popular doctrine of atonement should raise our ideas of the *justice*, or rather the severity of God, it must, in the same proportion, sink our ideas of his *mercy*; so that what the doctrine may have seemed to gain on the one hand, it loses on the other. And, moreover, though, in order to the forgiveness of sin, some farther severity on the part of God be supposed necessary, yet, according to the doctrine of atonement, this severity is so circumstanced, as entirely to lose its effect. For if the severity be to work upon men, the offenders themselves should feel it. It will be the same thing with the bulk of mankind, who are the persons to be wrought upon, whether the Divine Being animadvert upon the vices that are repented of, or not, if the offenders know that they themselves shall never feel it. This disinterested generosity might, indeed, induce some offenders to spare the lives of their substitutes; but if the sufferings had been endured already by some person of sufficient dignity, on the behalf of all future transgressors, it is impossible to conceive how the consideration of it



should be any restraint at all ; since nothing that any man could then do would expose any other to farther suffering.

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## SECTION II.

### *Of the true End and Design of the Death of Christ.*

HAVING shewn that the death of Christ is not to be considered as having made atonement, or satisfaction, to God for the sins of men, I shall now endeavour to shew what the end and use of it really were. Now the principal design of the life, as well as the death of Christ, seems to be not so much what we may expect to find in any particular texts, or single passages of the evangelists, or other writers of the New Testament, as what is suggested by a view of the history itself, what may be called the *language of the naked facts*, and what cannot but be understood wherever they are known. What has been written by christians may assist us to conceive more accurately concerning some particulars relating to christianity, but that must be of more importance, which does not require to be written, what the facts themselves necessarily speak, without any interpretation. Let us, therefore, examine what it is that may be clearly deduced from the history, and how much of christianity could not but have been known, if nothing had been written, provided a general idea of the life and death of Christ could have been transmitted to us in any other way.

If, then, we attend to the general facts recorded by the evangelists, we cannot but find that they afford the most satisfactory evidence of a resurrection and a future life. The history of Jesus contains (what cannot be said of any other history in the world) an authentic account of a man like ourselves, invested by almighty God with most extraordinary powers, not only teaching, without the least ambiguity or hesitation, the



doctrine of a future life of retribution for all mankind, and directing the views of his disciples to it, in preference to any thing in this world ; but passing his own life in a voluntary exclusion from all that men call great, and that others pursue with so much assiduity ; and, in obedience to the will of God, calmly giving up his life, in circumstances of public ignominy and torture, in the fullest persuasion, that he should receive it again with advantage. And in the accomplishment of his own prediction, he actually rose from the dead the third day. After this, he was seen by all those persons who had the most intimate knowledge of him before, and he did not leave them till after having conversed with them, at intervals, for a considerable time, in order to give them the most satisfactory evidence of the identity of his person.

Since, then, the great object of our Lord's mission was to teach the doctrine of a resurrection to a future immortal life, we see the necessity of his own death and resurrection as *a proof of his doctrine*. For whatever he might have *said*, or *done* while he lived, he could not have given the most satisfactory proof even of his own belief of a resurrection, unless he had actually died in the full expectation of it. Hence it is that the apostles glory in the consideration both of the death and of the resurrection of Christ, as 1 Cor. i. 22. *The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God ;* also 1 Cor. xv. 14, &c. *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

There is another manner in which we may be assisted in forming an idea of what is most essential to christianity. Suppose a number of persons, educated in the christian faith, to be cast upon a remote island, without any bible. It is probable they would first of all lose all distinct remembrance of the apostolical epistles, which may shew that these are a part of the New Testament the least necessary to be attended to. After



this, they would be apt to forget the particular discourses of our Lord; but the last thing they would retain would be the idea of a man, who had the most extraordinary power, spending his time in performing benevolent miracles, voluntarily submitting to many inconveniences, and last of all to a painful death, in a certain expectation of being presently raised to an immortal life, and to great happiness, honour, and power after death; and that these his expectations were actually fulfilled. They would also remember that this person always recommended the practice of virtue, and assured his followers that they would also be raised again to immortal life and happiness, if they persevered in well doing, as he had done.

Now, allowing that those persons, thus cut off from all communication with other christians, should retain only these general ideas of christianity (and it is hardly to be conceived that they could retain less) yet, would any body say that they were not christians, or that they were not possessed of the most important and practical truths of christianity, those truths which are most instrumental in purifying the heart and reforming the life?

Though there is no occasion to cite *particular texts* for what is clearly suggested by the *history* itself, and what could not but be known of it, if all that has been written concerning it were lost, yet, express texts are by no means wanting to shew that the true and proper design of the gospel, and consequently of the preaching and of the death of Christ, was to ascertain and exemplify the great doctrines of a resurrection and of a future state. I shall content myself with reciting only a few of them. John vi. 29. *This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who sees the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* xi. 25. *I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* ch. x. 10. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* Rev. i. 8. *I am he that liveth and was dead,*



*and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of the grave.*

The apostles, in all their writings, seem clearly to have understood this to have been the principal object of the mission of Christ. Thus Paul says concerning Christ, 2 Tim. i. 10. *He abolisheth death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

This doctrine of a resurrection to immortal life, and the making an express regard to it the principal sanction of the laws of virtue, is not only essential in the christian scheme, but is an advantage peculiar to christianity. The discourses of our Saviour relating to this subject appear, at first sight, to be in a strain quite different from that of any other teacher of virtue before him, inspired or uninspired. And what is above all, the *example* of a man, either living or dying, in the certain prospect of a speedy resurrection to an immortal life, was never before exhibited on the face of the earth. The object of the missions of other prophets was always something inferior, and introductory to this.

It is allowed that the argument for our having an interest in a future life, drawn from the consideration of the resurrection of Christ, is weakened by any opinion that represents him as of a nature superior to our own. But if, with the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, we conceive him to be *in all respects as we are*, his resurrection cannot but be considered, as a pattern and a pledge of ours. Hence the peculiar propriety of the divine appointment, explained by Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 21. *That since by man came death, by man should also come the resurrection of the dead*; and that as in consequence of our relation to Adam *all should die*, so in consequence of our relation to Christ, who is called *the second Adam*, we should *all be made alive*. The same argument is also more fully illustrated by the same apostle in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, in which, what we suffer by one man is contrasted by what we gain by another man.

The great object of the mission and death of Christ being to give the fullest proof of a future life of retribution, in order to supply the strongest motives to



virtue, we see the greatest propriety in those texts, in which this ultimate end of his sufferings is immediately connected with them, as Titus ii. 14. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* Eph. v. 25. *Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, &c.* Rev. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, &c.*

Also, true religion being by means of christianity extended to the gentile world, as well as the Jews, this ultimate end, viz. the abolition of the Jewish ritual, at least with respect to the Gentiles, is sometimes immediately connected with the mention of his death, as Eph. ii. 13. *But now in Christ Jesus, they who were a far off are made nigh, by the blood of Christ.* Col. ii. 14. *Blotting out the hand writings of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*

Besides the principal object of the death of Christ, other uses of it are occasionally mentioned, but they are such as are perfectly consistent with this. For instance, Christ having submitted to all these sufferings for so great and benevolent a purpose, it was highly proper that he should be rewarded for it; and the Divine Being has, therefore, in this case, exhibited an illustrious example of the manner in which he will always crown obedience to his will. Moreover, Christ, being a man like ourselves, and therefore influenced by hopes and fears, it was reasonable that he should have a view to this glorious reward, in order to support him under his sufferings, as is particularly expressed in the following passages. Rom. xiv. 9. *For this end Christ both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* Heb. xii. 2. *Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

As Christ was intended to be our example, and pattern, in his life, death, and resurrection from the dead, his sufferings were absolutely necessary to qualify him for the work on which he was sent. This is ex-



pressed in the following passages, which also clearly shew the necessity of his being a man like ourselves, in order to undergo sufferings like ours. Heb. ii. 10. *For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; for both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one (that is of one nature and rank) because he is not ashamed to call them brethren. For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood (that is, are men) he also himself likewise took part of the same (that is, was a man also) Wherefore, in all things, it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.*

As Christ was the person foretold by the ancient Jewish prophets, and he carried the proper and ultimate object of the law of Moses into execution; in a more extensive manner than it had ever been done before, giving a proper extent and force to its moral precepts, Christ is properly said to have come to fulfil the law, and for the accomplishment of ancient prophecies. Matt. v. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* Acts iii. 18. *But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.*

Lastly, as the end of Christ's mission necessarily required him to undergo a great variety of sufferings; he is, with propriety, said to come in order to exhibit to mankind a most perfect example of voluntary obedience to the will of God, under the severest trial of it; and his example is justly proposed to us under our trials and sufferings. Pet. ii. 21. *Christ also hath suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.* 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he (that is Christ) laid down his life for us; and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.*



## SECTION III.

*Of the Sense in which the Death of Christ is represented as a Sacrifice, and other figurative Representations of it.*

HAVING explained the one great and primary end of the life and death of Christ, and also pointed out the other secondary and subordinate ends which were likewise really answered by it, I shall now attempt to illustrate the *figurative representations* that are made of it by the sacred writers. These have unfortunately misled many christians, and have been the occasion of their entertaining opinions concerning the end of Christ's coming into the world, quite different from those which appear upon the very face of the history; opinions which are contradicted by the whole tenor of revelation, and which are extremely injurious to the character of the ever blessed God.

The most remarkable of these figurative representations of the death of Christ, is that in which he is compared to a *sacrifice*; and as a figure, it is just and beautiful. In every sacrifice the victim is slain for the benefit of the person on whose account it is offered; so Christ dying to procure the greatest possible benefit to the human race, is said to have given his life a sacrifice for us; and moreover as the end of the gospel is to promote the reformation of sinners, in order to procure the pardon of sin, the death of Christ is more expressly compared to a *sin offering*.

These points of resemblance between the death of Christ and the Jewish sacrifices, sufficiently justify and explain the language of the scriptures relating to it. From this circumstance, however, has arisen a notion, that the sacrifices prescribed in the Jewish law were *types* of this great, complete, and expiatory sacrifice of the death of Christ, which now supercedes and abrogates them. On account, therefore, of the great stress which has been laid on this view of the death of Christ, I shall consider it more fully than it would otherwise deserve.



All the texts in which Christ is indisputably represented as a sacrifice, are the following. Eph. v. 2. *Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to god, of a sweet smelling savour.* Heb. vii. 27. *Who needed not daily to offer sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people; for this he did once when he offered up himself.* The same allusion is also frequent in this epistle. We find it also, 1 Pet. i. 2, 18. Rev. v. 6. and 1 John ii. 2. *and he is the propitiation for our sins.* The same expression occurs, ch. iv. 10. But these two are the only places in which the word *propitiation* (ἱλασμός) occurs in the New Testament.

With respect to these texts, it is obvious to remark, that the far greater part of them are from one epistle of an unknown writer (for it is not *certain*, at least, that the epistle to the Hebrews was written by Paul) which is allowed, in other respects to abound with the strongest figures, metaphors, and allegories; and the rest are too few to bear the very great stress that has been laid upon them. Besides, the *manner* in which this idea is introduced in these texts, which is only *indirectly*, intimates plainly enough, that a few circumstances of resemblance are sufficient to justify the allusion. Had the writers really considered the death of Christ as the *intended antetype* of the sacrifices under the law; had this been the great and principal end of his death, it would have been asserted in the fullest and plainest manner, and references to it would certainly have been much more *direct* and frequent than they are.

It is something similar to this view of the death of Christ, as a sacrifice, that he is also called a *priest*, and a *high priest*, especially by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. But this very circumstance might have given us to understand, that both the representations are merely figurative, because both taken together are hardly consistent, at least they make a very harsh figure, and introduce confusion into our ideas.

That the death of Christ is no proper sacrifice for sin, or the intended antetype of the Jewish sacrifices, may be inferred from the following considerations.



1. Though the death of Christ is frequently mentioned, or alluded to, by the ancient prophets, it is never spoken of as a sin offering. For the propriety of our translation of Isaiah liii. 10. may be doubted; or if it be retained, it cannot be proved to exhibit any thing more than a figurative allusion. Now that this great event of the death of Christ should be foretold, with so many particular circumstances, and yet that the proper, the ultimate, and the great end of it should not be pointed out, is unaccountable.

2. Great weight is given to this observation by the converse of it, *viz.* that the Jewish sacrifices are nowhere said, in the Old Testament, to have any reference to another more perfect sacrifice, as might have been expected if they really had had any such reference. On the contrary, whenever the legal sacrifices are declared by the prophets to be insufficient to procure the favour of God, as they often are, the only thing that is ever opposed to them, as of more value in the sight of God, is *good works*, or *moral virtue*, as Ps. li. 16. *Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of the Lord are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* To the same purpose see Isaiah i. 11. &c. Hos. vi. 6. Amos v. 22. Mic. vi. 6.

The wisest of the Jews in our Saviour's time speak exactly in the same strain, and in the presence of our Lord himself; who is so far from disapproving of it, that he gives his own sanction to the sentiment in the most open manner. A scribe says, Mark xii. 32. *There is one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, &c. is better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, thou art not far from the kingdom of God.* Having a perfect knowledge of the Law, he was prepared for embracing the Gospel.

The general strain of the passages quoted and referred to above, cannot but appear very extraordinary, if the Jewish sacrifices had in reality, any reference to the death of Christ, and were intended to prefigure it, as types to an antetype.



3. Many other things, besides the death of Christ, are expressly called *sacrifices* by the sacred writers; and if it be universally allowed to be in a figurative sense only, why may not this be the case with the death of Christ also? Is. lxvi. 20. *They shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord.* Rom. xii. 1. *That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

4. Christians in general are frequently called *priests*, as well as Christ himself. 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.*

5. The death of Christ cannot be considered as a proper sacrifice for sin, because many things essential to such a sacrifice were wanting in it, especially its not being provided and presented by the sinner.

6. We meet with many figures in the writings of the apostles no less bold than this. Thus the body of Christ is the *veil* through which we pass to the holy of holies. We are said to be *circumcised* in his circumcision, and to be *buried* with him by baptism. Our sins are *crucified* with him, and we *rise again* with him in *newness of life*. After meeting with figures like these (and many more might be mentioned quite as harsh as these) can we be surprized that Christ, who died to promote the reformation of the world, should be called a *sacrifice for the sins of men*?

Still less shall we wonder at this, if we consider how familiar all the rites of the Jewish religion were to the minds of the apostles, so that whatever they were writing about, if it bore any resemblance to that ritual, it was sure to obtrude itself. It must also be considered, that the death of Christ was the greatest objection to christianity both with Jews and Gentiles; and what could tend more to remove this prejudice, with both of them, and especially the Jews, than taking every opportunity of describing it in language which to them was so familiar and respectable?

7. It has been said by some, that sacrifices were originally intended to prefigure the death of Christ; and that, in themselves considered, they were of such a nature, that they would never have been thought of by man, without an express command from God.



But whether sacrifices were originally appointed by God, or a method which men themselves thought (which I think not improbable) of expressing their gratitude to God, for his favours to them, when we consider the circumstances in which they were used, they appear easily to fall under either the general notion of *gifts*, or the more particular one of *entertainments*, furnished at the expence of the person who was dependent and obliged. They were therefore always considered as *acknowledgments* for favours received from, or of *homage* due to, God or man. In like manner, they might be used to deprecate the anger of God or man, or to procure favours of any other kind, by begetting in the mind of our patron an opinion of our respect and esteem for him.

To all these purposes served sacrifices before and under the law of Moses. Without a sacrifice, or some other gift, the Jews were not allowed to approach the tabernacle, or the temple, that is, the house of God. They were expressly commanded *never to appear before God empty, lest wrath should be upon them*, which was agreeable to a custom that is still universal in the East, never to appear in the presence of any prince, or great man, without a present.

That an offering of an animal upon the altar, was considered in the law of Moses, in the same light as any other offering or gift, and a sacrifice for sin, or any other sacrifice, is evident from several facts in the Jewish history, and from several circumstances in their ritual. In many cases, where a person was not able to provide an animal for a sacrifice, an offering of flour was accepted. The Philistines also, when they were convinced of their fault in taking captive the ark of God, returned it with a present of golden mice and emerods, to make atonement for them, evidently in the place of a sacrifice; and from the Grecian history it appears that (*αυαθημερια*), or presents of gold, silver, statues, &c. were considered by them as equivalent to expensive sacrifices for any purpose whatever.

In the Jewish ritual the ceremonies attending a sacrifice for sin did not differ in any thing material, from those that were used in any other sacrifice. Whatever



was the occasion of the sacrifice, the person who offered it, laid his hand, in a solemn manner, on the head of the victim, which was the formal *presentation* of it, the animal was slain, and the blood sprinkled. Part of the victim was always burnt on the altar, a part was the portion of the priest, and in some cases the remainder was eaten by the offerer. When, therefore, the Jews sacrificed an animal as a sin-offering, the use and signification of the *sacrifice itself*, were the same as if it had been intended to procure any other favour; and there was no more *bearing of sin*, or any thing properly *vicarious* in the offering of the animal that was made a sin-offering, than if it had been sacrificed on an occasion of thanksgiving, or any other account.

From all that has been said concerning sacrifices under the Law, and the history of their uses, they appear to have been considered as *circumstances attending an address to the deity*, and not as things that were of any avail in themselves. It was not the sacrifice, but the priest that was said to *make atonement*; nor was a sacrifice universally necessary for that purpose. For, upon several occasions, we read of atonement being made when there was no sacrifice. Phineas is said to have made atonement for the children of Israel by slaying the transgressors, Num. xxv. 13. Moses made atonement by prayer only, Ex. xxxii. 30. And Aaron made atonement with incense.

Whenever the writers of the Old Testament treat largely concerning sacrifices, it is evident the idea they had of them was the same with that which they had concerning gifts, or presents of any other nature. Thus the Divine Being is represented as saying, Ps. lviii. 8, &c. *I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy fold; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High, &c.*

Lastly, if the death of Christ had been a proper sa-



sacrifice, and the forgiveness of sins had depended upon it only, we should hardly have found the *resurrection of Christ* represented as having had the same use, as Rom. iv. 45. *He was raised again for our justification.* As figures of speech, these things are consistent enough, but not otherwise.

8. Had the death of Christ been simply and properly a *sacrifice*, we should not expect to find it denominated in any manner that was inconsistent with this representation, which, however, is very common in the scriptures. If there be a resemblance to the death of Christ in those things to which they compare it, the writers are sufficiently justified, as such *figures of speech* are adapted to give a strong view of what they wish to describe; but if no figure be intended, they are chargeable with real inconsistency, in calling the same thing by different names. If one of the representations be real, and the rest figurative, how are we to distinguish among them, when the writers themselves give us no intimation of any such difference? This circumstance alone seems to prove that they made use of all these representations in the same view, which, therefore, could be no other than as comparisons in certain respects.

Because the word *atonement* frequently occurs in the Old Testament, and in some cases atonements are said to have been made for sin by sacrifices, this whole business, has, on this account more particularly, been thought to refer to the death of Christ, as the only atoning sacrifice. But this notion must be given up if we consider the meaning of *atonement* under the Jewish dispensation.

From comparing all the passages in which atonement is mentioned, it is evident that it signifies the making of any thing *clean*, or *holy*, so as to be fit to be used in the service of God, or, when applied to a person; fit to come into the presence of God; God being considered as, in a peculiar manner, the king and sovereign of the Israelitish nation, and as it were, keeping a court among them. Thus atonement was said to be made for the *altar*. Exod. xxix. 36, and for a *house* after having been infected with leprosy, Lev. xiv. 58.



Aaron made atonement for the *Levites*, Num. viii. 12. when they were dedicated to their office and ministry, when no sin, or offence, is said to have been done away by it. Atonement was also made at the purification of a leper, Lev. xiv. 18. Burnt offerings that were wholly *voluntary* are said to be accepted to make atonement for the offerer, Lev. i. 3. Atonements were also appointed after involuntary uncleanness, and sins of ignorance, as well as in some cases of wilful transgression, upon repentance and restitution; but in this case it had no relation to the pardon of sin in the sight of God, but only to the decency and propriety of public worship, for which, a man who had so offended was considered as disqualified. Guilt, in a moral sense, is never said to be atoned for by any sacrifice, but the contrary is strongly expressed by David and others.

The English word *atonement*, occurs but once in the New Testament, and in other places the same word in the original (*καταλλαγή*) is rendered *reconciliation*; and this word is never used by the Seventy in any passage relating to legal atonements.

Had the death of Christ been the proper atoning sacrifice for the sins of men, and as such, been prefigured by the atonements in the Jewish dispensation, we might have expected not only to have been expressly told so (if not from the first, at least, after the fulfilment of the prophetic type) but also that the time, and other circumstances of the death of Christ, should have corresponded to those of the types of it. Christ being put to death at the feast of passover might lead us to imagine that his death had some reference to that business; but if he had died as a proper *expiatory sacrifice*, it might have been expected that he would have died on the *day of expiation*, and at the time when the high priest was entering into the holy of holies. Had this been the case, I much doubt whether it would have been in the power of any *reasons*, though ever so solid, to have prevented men from considering the one as the proper type of the other. Now the want of this coincidence should lead our minds off from making such a comparison.

In one passage of the New Testament Christ is said



to have died as a *curse* for us. Gal. iii. 10. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*

Mention is made of several kinds of *things accursed* under the Jewish constitution, but in general they were things devoted to destruction. Christ, therefore, may, in a figurative way of speaking, be considered as a *curse* for us, in consequence of his devoting himself to death for us. But that this can be nothing more than a figure, is evident, because this idea of a curse is inconsistent with that of a sacrifice, and therefore shews that both these representations are to be considered as mere figures of speech. Though in some of the heathen sacrifices the victim was an animal abhorred by the god to which it was offered, as the goat sacrificed to Bacchus; yet in the Jewish sacrifices the victim was always a clean and useful animal, and perfect in its kind. And, nothing *accursed* was ever suffered to be brought to the altar of God. Cities and cattle accursed were in the Law devoted to utter destruction. Not one sheep or ox of all the cattle of Jericho, or of the Amalakites, was permitted to be sacrificed.

Christ is also compared to the *paschal lamb* among the Jews. 1 Cor. v. 7. *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* Also when the legs of Jesus were not broken upon the cross it is said John xix. 36. *These things were done that the scriptures might be fulfilled, a bone of him shall not be broken,* evidently referring to the same words in Ex. xii. 46, which relate to the *paschal lamb*.

There are, moreover, several other circumstances in the evangelical history which lead us to this view of the death of Christ, especially that of his being crucified at the feast of passover, and of his instituting the Lord's supper at that time; and seemingly in resemblance of it, as if it was to be considered in the same light. However, the *paschal lamb* was far from being a proper sacrifice. It is never so denominated in the Old Testament, except once, Ex. xii. 27, where it is called *the sacrifice of the Lord's passover*. But this could be only in some secondary or partial sense, and not in the proper and primary sense of the word. For



there was no priest employed upon the occasion, no part was burned or offered unto the Lord. And certainly no *propitiation* or *atonement* is said to have been made by it, and therefore it was very far from being a sin offering.

Christ, with respect to his death, is by himself compared to the *serpent* which was exposed by Moses in the wilderness, that those of the people who looked upon it might be cured of the bite of such serpents. Here the analogy is obvious. The distempers of which they were cured were of the body, but those of which we are cured by the gospel are of the mind. John iii. 14. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of Man be lifted up.* Ch. xii. 32. *And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.* In this latter text the allusion is perhaps different from that above mentioned; for here Christ, being raised above the earth by means of the cross, is represented as drawing men from earth towards Heaven.

I shall close this account of the figurative representations of the death of Christ that occur in the New Testament, with a view of the principal *uses* that the sacred writers make of it in illustrating other things. They shew that the apostles were glad to take every opportunity of considering the death of Christ *in a moral view*, as affording the strongest motives to a holy life. They also shew a fondness for very strong figures of speech. For the greater part of the metaphors in the following verses are much bolder, and more far fetched than comparing the death of Christ to a sacrifice. Rom. vi. 3. *Know ye not, that so many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism, unto death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of his Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, &c.* Gal. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* Ch. vi. 14. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.* See also, Eph. ii. 5, 6.



SECTION IV.

*Various Kinds of Phraseology respecting the Death of Christ explained.*

BESIDES the death of Christ being expressly called a *sacrifice*, and various sacrificial expressions being applied to it, the language of scripture is thought to favour the doctrine of atonement in various other respects, perfectly corresponding with the idea of its being a proper sacrifice, and irreconcilable with other views of it. I shall therefore, briefly consider every representation which I can find of this nature.

1. Christ is frequently said to have *died for us*. But, in general, this may be interpreted of his dying *on our account*, or *for our benefit*. Or, if, when rigorously interpreted, it should be found that if Christ had not died, we must have died, it is still, however, only *consequentially so*, and by no means properly and *directly so*, as a *substitute* for us. For if, in consequence of Christ not having been sent to instruct and reform the world, mankind had continued unreformed, and the necessary consequence of Christ's coming was his death, by whatever means, and in whatever manner it was brought about, it is plain that there was, in fact, no other alternative, but his death, or ours. How natural then was it, especially to writers accustomed to the strong figurative expression of the East, to say that he died *in our stead*, without meaning it in a strict and proper sense, as if God had absolutely required the death of Christ, in order to satisfy his justice for our sins, and as a necessary means of his forgiving us. Nothing but declarations much more definite and express, contained at least in some part of scripture, could authorize us to interpret in this manner such general expressions as the following, John x. 11. *I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*, ch. xv. 13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*. 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for*



*the unjust, that he might bring us to God. John xi. 50. It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

A shepherd, in risking his life for his sheep, evidently gives his life for theirs, in a sufficiently proper sense; because if he had not thrown himself in the way of the wild beasts that were rushing upon his sheep they must have died. But here was no compact between the beasts and the shepherd; the blood of the sheep was not due to them, nor did they accept of that of the shepherd in its stead. This case is, therefore, no proper parallel to the death of Christ, on the principle of the doctrine of atonement.

2. Christ is said to have given his life as a *ransom* (*λυτρον*) for us, but it is only in two passages that this view of it occurs, viz. Matt. xx. 28. and Mark x. 45, both of which contain the same expressions, as delivered by our Saviour on the same occasion. *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* 1 Tim. ii. 8. *Who gave himself a ransom* (*αυτολυτρον*) *for all.* We meet, however, with other expressions similar to these; as Tit. ii. 14. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

In all these cases, the price of redemption is said to have been given by Christ, but had we been authorized to interpret these expressions as if we had been doomed to die, and Christ had interposed, and offered his life to the Father in the place of ours, the representation might have been expected to be uniform; whereas, we find, in general, that the price of our redemption is given by God, as John iii. 16. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have everlasting life.* Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?*

This language, on the part of God, or of Christ, is very proper, considered as figurative. For if nothing but the mission of Christ could have saved the world, and his death was the necessary consequence of his un-



dertaking it, God is very properly said to have given him up for us ; or since he undertook the work voluntarily, and from the love that he bore to man, he also may be said to have given his life as a ransom for ours ; and thus these texts come under the same general idea with those explained above. In a figurative sense the gospel may be said to be the most *expensive provision* that God has made for recovering men from the power of sin, in order to purchase them, as it were, for himself.

3. Christ is said to *bear the sins of men* in the following texts. *Is. liii. 11. He shall bear their iniquities. v. 12. He bore the sins of many. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Who his own self bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree. Heb. ix. 28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.* But the idea we ought to annex to the term *bearing sin*, is that of *bearing it away*, or *removing it*, an effect which is produced by the power of the gospel. These texts are, therefore, similar to *1 John iii. 5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin, and in him was no sin.* The phrase, *bearing sin*, is never applied, under the Law, but to the *scape-goat*, on the day of expiation, which was not sacrificed, but as the name expresses, was turned out into the wilderness.

We see clearly in what sense the evangelist Matthew, understood the passage above quoted from Isaiah ; when, speaking of some of our Saviour's miraculous cures, he says, *ch. viii. 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.* Now how did Christ bear the diseases of men ? not by taking them on himself, and becoming diseased as they had been, but by radically curing them. So also Christ *bears*, that is, *bears away* or *removes*, the sins of men, by healing their distempered minds, and restoring them to a sound and virtuous state, by the power of his gospel.

4. Some who are willing to give up the idea of Christ dying as a proper sacrifice for us, or in our stead, say nevertheless, that God forgives the sins of men *for the sake of the merits*, or at the *intercession* of Christ, and that this appears to be analogous to the divine conduct in other respects ; as God is often said to shew favour to some on the account of others, and



especially to have spared the Israelites on account of their relation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and for this reason they say we are required to ask *in the name of Christ*. The texts, however, which bear this aspect, are very few, perhaps none beside the following. 1 John ii. 1. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

It is not denied, that it may be consistent with the maxims of divine government, to shew favour to some persons on the account of others to whom they bear a near relation. It is a wise maxim in human government, because we are, in many cases, as much concerned for others, as for ourselves ; and therefore a favour to a man's children, and posterity, may be the proper reward of his own merit, and also answer other ends of a *reward*, by being a motive to other persons to behave well. But in general, favours distributed in this manner, are such as it is perfectly consistent with divine rectitude to grant to men without any regard to others, as giving the land of Canaan to the posterity of Abraham, &c. When the Jews incurred actual guilt, they were always punished like any other people, and by no means spared on account of their relation to Abraham. On the contrary, they are often said to have been more severely punished for not improving their privileges, as his descendants, &c.

Admitting, however, that God may be represented as forgiving sin, in particular cases, on this principle ; if *all sin* be forgiven for the sake of Christ only, we ought, at least, to have been expressly told so. Our Saviour never says that forgiveness of sin was procured by him, but he always speaks of the free mercy of God in the same manner as the prophets who preceded him ; and it is particularly remarkable that in his last prayer, which is properly *intercessory*, we find nothing on the subject.

If any stress be laid on Christ being said to be our *advocate*, the Holy Spirit is much more frequently and properly called so ; and by our Lord himself ; and he is represented by Paul as acting the part of an advocate and intercessor. Rom. viii. 26. *The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.*



Repentance and the remission of sin are said to be preached in the name of Christ. Luke xxiv. 47. and through him. Acts xiii. 38. And all who believe in him are said to have remission of sin, through his name. ch. x. 43. But this phraseology is easily explained on the idea that the preaching of the gospel reforms the world, and that the remission of sin is consequent on reformation. In one passage, indeed, according to our translation, God is said to forgive sin *for the sake of Christ*. Eph. iv. 32. *Be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.* But in the original it is *in Christ*, and may be understood of *the gospel of Christ*. Had sin been forgiven, in a proper and strict sense, for the sake of Christ, the word *freely* would hardly have been used, as it often is, with relation to it, as in Rom. iii. 34. for this implies that forgiveness is the free gift of God, and proceeds from his essential goodness and mercy, without regard to any foreign consideration whatever.

The very great variety of manners in which the sacred writers speak of the method in which the pardon of sin is dispensed, is a proof that we are to allow something to the use of figures in their language upon this subject; for some of these phrases must be accommodated to the others. In general, the pardon of sin is represented as the act of God himself, but in some particular cases it is said to be the act of Christ. Matt. ix. 6. *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sin.* Col. iii. 13. *Even as Christ hath forgiven you, so also do ye.* But upon a careful examination of such texts as these, and the comparison of them with those in which the pardon of sin seems to be represented as dispensed in consideration of the *sufferings*, the *merit*, the *resurrection*, the *life*, or the *obedience*, of Christ (for all these views of it occur) we cannot but conclude that they are partial representations, which, at proper distances, are allowed to be inconsistent, without any charge of impropriety; and that, according to the plain general tenor of scripture, the pardon of sin, is in reality, always dispensed by the free mercy of God; on account of



men's personal virtue, a penitent upright heart, and a reformed exemplary life, without regard to the sufferings, or merit, of any being whatever.

On this subject I would refer my readers to a very valuable essay on the doctrine of atonement in the *Theological Repository* \*, in which the writer (who is the Rev. Mr. Turner of Wakefield) shews that in the Old Testament to make atonement for any *thing* or *person*, signifies, as I have mentioned above, making it, or him, *clean, or proper for divine service*; and that in the New Testament, similar expressions, which are there used by way of figure or allusion, relate to the establishment and confirmation of the advantages we at present enjoy by the gospel, and particularly the free and uninterrupted liberty of worshipping God according to the institutions of Christ, granted to us in the gospel; just as the legal atonements served similar purposes under that dispensation †. But he says he doth not recollect any texts in which the death of Christ is represented as the *cause, reason, or motive*, why God has conferred these blessings on man.

The advocates for the doctrine of atonement must be embarrassed, when they consider, that, the godhead of Christ being incapable of suffering, his *manhood* alone was left to endure all the wrath of God that was due for every sin which he forgives; and surely one man (and that which actually suffered of Christ, on their own principles was no more) could never make a sufficient atonement for the sins of the *whole world*, or even of the *elect* only, especially considering, as they do, that the sufferings of Christ were but temporary, and the punishment due to sin eternal.

There is a considerable difference in opinion, also, with respect to the *place, or scene* of this expiatory suffering. In general it is thought to have been, in part, at the time of the agony in the garden, and in part on the cross. But to account for this extraordinary suffering, they are obliged to suppose something uncommon, and undescribable in it, to which nothing in the common feelings of human nature ever corre-

\* Vol. iii. p. 385, &c.

† Ibid. p. 431.



sponded, though at the same time, it was only human nature that suffered.

Bishop Burnet was aware of this difficulty, and he expresses his ideas of it in a very natural manner, so as to shew clearly how his scheme was pressed with it. In his *Exposition of the 39 Articles* \*, he says, "It is not easy for us to apprehend in what that agony consisted. For we understand only the agonies of pain, or of conscience, which last arise out of the horror of guilt, or the apprehension of the wrath of God. It is, indeed, certain that he who had no sin could have no such horror in him; and yet it is as certain that he could not be put into such agony only through the apprehension and fear of that violent death which he was to suffer the next day. Therefore we ought to conclude that there was an inward suffering in his mind, as well as an outward visible one in his body. We cannot distinctly apprehend what that was, since he was sure both of his own spotless innocence, and of his Father's unchangeable love to him. We can only imagine a vast sense of the heinousness of sin, and a deep indignation at the dishonour done to God by it, a melting apprehension of the corruption and miseries of mankind by reason of sin, together with the never before felt withdrawing of those consolations that had always filled his soul. But what might be farther in his agony and in his last dereliction we cannot distinctly apprehend. Only this we perceive, that our minds are capable of great pain, as well as our bodies are. Deep horror, with an inconsolable sharpness of thought, is a very intolerable thing. Notwithstanding the bodily or substantial indwelling of the fulness of the godhead in him, yet he was capable of feeling vast pain in his body, so that he might become a complete sacrifice, and we might have from his sufferings, a very full and amazing apprehension of the guilt of sin. All those emanations of joy with which the indwelling of the eternal word had ever till then filled his soul, might then, when he needed them most, be quite withdrawn, and he be

\* Page 67.



“ left merely to the firmness of his faith, to his patient  
 “ resignation to the will of his heavenly Father, and  
 “ to his willing readiness to drink of that cup which  
 “ his Father had put in his hand to drink.”

All this only shews how miserably men may involve themselves in systems unsupported by facts. Our Saviour, as an innocent man, could have no terrors of a guilty conscience, and therefore he could feel nothing but the dread of his approaching painful and ignominious death. But having a clearer idea of this, as we perceive in the history, and consequently of the agony of it, than other men generally have of approaching sufferings, the apprehension which he was under, no doubt, affected his mind more than we can well conceive. Those who consider Christ as something more than a man, cannot imagine how he should be so much affected in those circumstances; but there is no difficulty in the case with those who consider him as a being made *exactly like themselves*, and perhaps of a delicate tender habit.

As to the sins of others, it is natural to suppose that his mind would be less at leisure to attend to them then, than at any other time, his mind being necessarily occupied with the sense of his own suffering; and accordingly we find that all he says upon that occasion respects himself only. *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* That the presence of God forsook him, whatever he meant by it, is not at all supported by fact; and when he was much oppressed with sorrow, an angel was sent on purpose to comfort and strengthen him.

He went through the scene of his trial and crucifixion with wonderful composure, and without the least appearance of any thing like agony of mind. His saying, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*, was probably, nothing more than his reciting the first verse of the 22d Psalm, to which he might wish to direct the attention of those who were present, as it contained many things peculiarly applicable to his case. There is nothing in this scene, any more than in his agony in the garden, but what is easily explicable, on



the supposition of Christ being a man ; and to suppose that he was then under an agony of mind, impressed upon him, in any inexplicable manner, by the immediate hand of God, in order to aggravate what he would naturally suffer, and thereby make his sufferings an adequate expiation for the sins of the world, is a mere arbitrary supposition, not countenanced by any one circumstance in the narration.

Calvin, as we shall see, supposed the great scene of our Saviour's sufferings to have been in *hell*, in the interval between his death and the resurrection. But this is an hypothesis no less arbitrary and unsupported than any other.

Having now seen what the scriptures contain concerning the doctrine of atonement, let us see what christians in after ages have built upon it. The foundation, we shall find, very inadequate to the superstructure.

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## SECTION V.

### *Of the Opinions of the Apostolical Fathers.*

WHEN any mode of speech may be understood either in a *literal* or in a *figurative* sense, there must be some difficulty in ascertaining the real meaning of the person who makes use of it. For it is the same thing as if the word was properly ambiguous. Thus a papist and a protestant equally make use of the words of our Saviour, *this is my body*, but it does not therefore follow that they think alike with respect to the Lord's supper. For one of them uses the expression as a mere figure of speech, meaning that the bread and wine are representations, or memorials, of the body and blood of Christ ; whereas the other takes them to be the body and blood itself, without any figure.

In like manner, it cannot be determined from the primitive christians calling the death of Christ a *sacri-*



*fice for sin, a ransom, &c.* or from their saying, in a general way, that Christ died in our stead, and that he *bore our sins*, or even if they carried this figurative language a little farther, that they really held what is now called *the doctrine of atonement*, viz. that it would have been inconsistent with the maxims of God's moral government to pardon any sin whatever, unless Christ had died to make satisfaction to divine justice for it. Because the language above-mentioned may be made use of by persons who only believe that the death of Christ was a necessary circumstance in the scheme of the gospel, and that this scheme was necessary to reform the world.

According to the modern system, there is nothing in any of the good works of men that can at all recommend them to the favour of God; that their repentance and reformation is no *reason* or *motive* with him to forgive their sins, and that all the mercy which he ever shews them is on the account of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to them. But it will appear that this language was altogether unknown in the early ages of christianity; and accordingly Basnage \*, ingenuously acknowledges, that the ancients speak *meagrely* (*maigrement*) of the satisfaction of Christ, and give much to good works; a sufficient indication, I should think, that they had no such ideas as he had concerning the satisfaction of Christ, and that they considered the good works of men as *in themselves* acceptable to God; in the same manner as the virtue or merit of Christ was acceptable to him. I shall, however, quote from the early christian writers as much as may enable us to perceive how they thought with respect to this subject.

In the epistle of Clemens Romanus are some expressions which, taken singly, might seem to favour the doctrine of atonement. But the general strain of his writings shews that he had no proper idea of it. Exhorting the Corinthians to repentance, and to virtue in general, he mentions the example of Christ in the following manner. "Let us consider what is good  
"and acceptable, and well pleasing in the sight of him  
"that made us. Let us look steadfastly to the blood  
"of Christ, and see how precious his blood is in the

\* *Histoire des eglises reformées*, vol. i. p. 75.



“ fight of God, which being shed for our salvation,  
 “ has obtained the grace of repentance for all the  
 “ world \*.” This seems to be little more than a repetition of what is said in the book of Acts, of Christ being *exalted as a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.*

He farther says †, “ Let us search into all ages that  
 “ have gone before, and let us learn that the Lord  
 “ has, in every one of them, still given place for repentance to such as would turn to him.” He then mentions the preaching of Noah to the old world, and of Jonah to the Ninevites, of whom he says, “ Howbeit they, repenting of their sins, appeased God by their prayer, and were saved though they were strangers to the covenant of God.” After this he recites what Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets have said to this purpose ; and in all his subsequent exhortations he seems, to have no idea of any thing but repentance and the mercy of God, and the immediate consequence of it, without the interposition of any thing else. “ Wherefore, says he ‡, Let us obey his excellent and glorious will, and imploring his mercy and goodness, let us fall down upon our faces before him, and cast ourselves upon his mercy.”

This writer also speaks of virtue alone as having immediately great power with God. “ And especially §, let them learn how great a power humility has with God, how much a pure and holy charity avails with him, how excellent and great his fear is, and how it will save all such as turn to him with holiness in a pure mind.” He speaks of the efficacy of faith in the same language with the apostle Paul. “ The Jews,” he says ||, “ were all greatly glorified, not for their own sakes; or for their own works, or for righteousness which they themselves had wrought, but through his will” (in consequence of the blessing promised to Abraham) “ And we also, being called by the same will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, either by our own wisdom, or knowledge, or piety, or the works which we have

\* Sect. vii. Cotlierii, edit. vol i. p. 150. † lb. ‡ Sect. 9.  
 § Sect. 21. || Sect. 32.



“done, in the holiness of our hearts, but by that faith  
 “by which God almighty has justified all men from  
 “the beginning.” But by *faith* this writer only  
 means another virtue of the mind, *viz.* that regard to  
 God, belief in his promises, and submission to his will,  
 which supports the mind of man in great difficulties and  
 trials. This was plainly his idea of the justification of  
 Abraham himself. “For what, was our Father Abra-  
 “ham blessed \*; was it not that through faith he  
 “wrought righteousness and truth.”

It is possible that persons not acquainted with the  
 writings of the apostolical Fathers would imagine that,  
 when they used such phrases as being *justified by the*  
*blood of Christ*, they must mean, as some now do, that  
 without the death of Christ our repentance would have  
 been of no avail; but when we consider all that they  
 have written, and the language of those, who followed  
 them, who treat more fully on the subject, and who  
 appear not to have been sensible that they thought dif-  
 ferently from them with respect to it, we shall be satis-  
 fied that those phrases conveyed no such ideas to them  
 as they now do to us.

Barnabas speaking of the Jewish sacrifices, says †;  
 “These things, therefore, has God abolished, that the  
 “new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without  
 “the yoke of any such necessity, might have the spirit-  
 “ual offerings of men themselves. For so the Lord  
 “saith again, to those heretofore; Did I at all command  
 “your Fathers, when they came out of the land of  
 “Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But  
 “this I commanded them, saying, let none of you im-  
 “agine evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and  
 “love no false oath. For as much then as we are not  
 “without understanding, we ought to apprehend the  
 “design of our merciful Father. For he speaks to us,  
 “being willing that we, who have been in the same  
 “error about the sacrifices, should think and find how  
 “to approach unto him; and therefore he thus be-  
 “speaks us; The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.  
 “A broken and a contrite heart God will not despise.”  
 This is not substituting the sacrifice of Christ in the

\* Sect. 31. † Sect. ii. Cotlierii, edit. p. 57.



place of the sacrifices under the law, but moral virtue only.

In the *shepherd of Hermas* (if this should be thought to be the work of the Hermas mentioned by Paul) we find nothing of the doctrine of atonement, but strong expressions denoting the acceptableness of repentance and good works only. "Then," says he\*, "shall their sins be forgiven, which they have heretofore committed, and the sins of all the saints, who have sinned even unto this day, if they will repent with all their hearts, and remove all doubts out of their heart." He farther says †, "Whoever has suffered for the name of the Lord are esteemed honourable by the Lord, and all their offences are blotted out, because they have suffered death for the name of the Son of God."

It seems pretty evident that *so far* we find no real change of opinion with respect to the efficacy of the death of Christ. These writers adopt the language of the apostles, using the term *sacrifice* in a figurative sense, and represent the value of good works, without the least hint or caution lest we should thereby detract from the merits of Christ, and the doctrine of salvation by his imputed righteousness.

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## SECTION VI.

*Of the Opinion of the Fathers till after the Time of  
Austin.*

THAT it was not the received doctrine of the christian church within this period, that Christ did, in any proper sense, make the Divine Being placable to men; but that the pardon of sin proceeded from the free mercy of God, independently of his sufferings and merit, may, I think, be clearly inferred from several considerations.

\* Vis. ii. Sect. 2.

† Sim. ix. Sect. 28.



r. This doctrine, on which so much stress has been laid by some moderns, is never enumerated as an article of christian faith, in any ancient *summary of christian doctrine*; and the early christian writers, especially those who made apologies for christianity, had frequent occasion to do it; and we have several summaries of this kind.

To say nothing of the apologies of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tertullian, who give accounts of the principal articles of christian faith, but may be thought to do it too concisely for us to expect that they should take notice of such a doctrine as this (though the great importance of it, in the opinion of those who hold this doctrine, is such, as ought to have given it the preference of any other) I cannot help laying particular stress on the omission of it by Lactantius, who treats professedly of the system of christianity, as it was generally received in his days. Yet in his *Divine Institutions*, there is so far from being any mention of the necessity of the death of Christ to atone for the sins of men, that he treats of the nature of sin, of the mercy of God, and of the efficacy of repentance, as if he had never heard of any such doctrine.

We see his sentiments on these subjects very fully in his treatise *De Ira Dei*\*. And when he professedly considers the reasons of the incarnation and death of Christ †, he only says, that, “example was necessary” to be exhibited to men as well as precepts, and therefore it was necessary that God should be clothed “with a mortal body, be tempted, suffer, and die.” He gives no other reason whatever. Again, he says ‡, “Christ was made flesh, because he was not only to teach, but also to do, and to be an example, that none might allege in their excuse the weakness of the flesh.”

Cyprian, an earlier writer, often mentions the humiliation and sufferings of Christ, but always either as an example, or simply as foretold by the prophets.

Arnobius says, That §, “Christ permitted his man, that is, the man to whom he was united to be killed,”

\* Cap. xix. xx. † Epitome, chap. l. p. 142. ‡ Cap. v. p. 143. § Lib. i. p. 24.



“ that, in consequence of it (viz. his resurrection afterwards) it might appear that what they had been taught concerning the safety of their souls was safe, or to be depended upon, and that death was not to be defeated any other way.”

Austin, in several places, speaks of the end of Christ's life and death, but never as designed to make satisfaction for the sins of men, but generally as an example. “ In his passion he shewed what we ought to endure ; in his resurrection, what we are to hope for \*.” Speaking of the incarnation in general, he says †, “ Christ assumed a human body, and lived among men, that he might set us an example of living, and dying, and rising again.” When he speaks figuratively, it is plain he did not carry his ideas so far as the orthodox now do. “ In his death,” he says, “ he made a gainful traffick, he purchased faithful men, and martyrs. He bought us with his blood. He laid down the price of our redemption.” But he likewise says, “ the martyrs have returned what was laid out for them, that is, have given what was purchased, even their lives.”

Some orthodox writers complain of the imperfect knowledge which the primitive christian writers had of the christian system in this respect. Gallæus observes, according to Lardner ‡, that Lactantius said little or nothing of Christ's priestly office. Lardner himself, adds, “ I do not remember that Jerom hath any where taken notice of this, but it is likely enough to be true ; and that Lactantius did not consider Christ's death in the modern way, as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, or satisfaction made to divine justice for the sins of the human race, may be argued from the passages which he quotes from it concerning the value of repentance, and the ends of Christ's death.” He adds that “ many other ancient christians will come in for their share in this charge.” For according to Flacius Illyricus, “ the christian writers who lived

\* Lardner's Credibility, vol. x. p. 219. † Ib. ‡ Lardner's Credibility, vol. vii. p. 145.



“ soon after Christ and his apostles, discoursed like  
 “ philosophers, of the Law, and its moral precepts,  
 “ and of the nature of virtue and vice, but they were  
 “ totally ignorant of man’s natural corruption, the  
 “ mysteries of the gospel, and Christ’s benefit. His  
 “ countryman Jerom,” he says, “ was well skilled  
 “ in the languages, and endeavoured to explain the  
 “ scripture by versions and commentaries ; but after  
 “ all, he was able to do but very little, being igno-  
 “ rant of the human disease, and of Christ the physi-  
 “ cian, and wanting both the key of scripture, and the  
 “ lamb of God to open to him.”

The same Flacius, or some other learned writer of his time, observes concerning Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, that “ it is a very low and imperfect description  
 “ which he gives of a christian, making him only a  
 “ man, who by the knowledge of Christ and his doctrine, is brought to the worship of the one true God,  
 “ and the practice of sobriety, righteousness, patience,  
 “ and other virtues. But he hath not a word about  
 “ regeneration or imputed righteousness.”

I cannot forbear adding what Dr. Lardner very pertinently subjoins to this quotation. “ Poor ignorant,  
 “ primitive christians, I wonder how they could find  
 “ the way to heaven. They lived near the times of  
 “ Christ and his apostles. They highly valued, and  
 “ diligently read the holy scriptures, and some of  
 “ them wrote commentaries upon them ; but yet, it  
 “ seems, they knew little or nothing of their religion,  
 “ though they embraced and professed it with the manifest hazard of all earthly good things ; and many of  
 “ them laid down their lives rather than renounce it.  
 “ Truly we of these times are very happy in  
 “ our orthodoxy ; but I wish that we did more excel in those virtues which they, and the scriptures  
 “ likewise, I think recommend, as the distinguishing properties of a christian. And I am not a little apprehensive, that many things which now make a fair  
 “ shew among us, and in which we mightily pride  
 “ ourselves, will in the end prove *weeds* only, on  
 “ which the owner of the ground sets no value.”



2. Some controversies were started in the primitive times which could not have failed to draw forth the sentiments of the orthodox defenders of the faith on this subject, if they had really believed the death of Christ to be a proper sacrifice for sin, and that without it, God either could not, or would not, pardon any sin.

All the Docetæ, and the Gnostics in general, who believed that Christ was man only in appearance, and did not really suffer, could have no idea of the meritorious nature of his death, as such; and yet this is never objected to any of them by Irenæus, or others, who write the most largely against them.

The Manicheans also did not believe that Christ died, and consequently, as Beaufobre, who writes their history, observes, they must necessarily have ascribed the salvation of the soul to the doctrine and the example of Christ; and yet none of the primitive Fathers who write against them observe, that the great end of Christ's coming into the world would then be defeated, in that the sins of men would not be satisfied for\*. Austin, who writes against the Manicheans, and from whom, on account of his doctrine of *grace and original sin*, we might expect a complete system of atonement, never objects to them their want of such a doctrine, but combats them on other principles.

3. Had the ancient christians writers had the ideas which some of the moderns have concerning the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, and the insufficiency of good works, they could not have expressed themselves as they generally do, with respect to the value of repentance and *good works* in the sight of God.

Cyprian says, "What sinners ought to do, the divine precepts inform us, viz. that satisfaction is made to God by good works, and that sins are done away by the merit of compassion."

Lactantius says †, "Let no one who has been led in to sin by the impulse of passion despair of himself, for he may be restored if he repent of his sins, and by good works make satisfaction to God, (*satisfaciat deo*): "For if we think our children to be corrected

\* Lardner's Credibility. vol. vi. p. 294.

† Inst. lib. vi. cap. 24. p. 621.



“ when they repent of their faults, why should we despair of the clemency of God being pacified by repentance (*penitendo posse placari*).” Again \*, “ Whoever, therefore, obeys the divine precepts is a worshipper of the true God, whose sacrifices are gentleness of mind, an innocent life and good works.”

The manner in which Austin speaks of the merit of good works, shews that he could not have any proper idea of the satisfaction of Christ. “ By these alone,” he says, “ We secure happiness. In this way we recover ourselves, in this way we come to God, and are reconciled to him, whom we have greatly provoked. When we shall be brought before his presence, let our good works there speak for us, and let them so speak that they may prevail over our offences. For which soever is most will prevail, either for punishment, or for mercy †.”

4. The merit of *martyrdom* was held in the highest esteem by all the primitive christians. If, therefore, good works in general were thought by them to have merit with God, much more may we expect to find that they had this idea of what they considered as the most heroic act of virtue. And indeed the language of the primitive christians on the subject of martyrdom is exceedingly inconsistent with any notion of atonement for sin by the death of Christ alone, without regard to any thing that man can do for himself.

Ignatius, in a fragment of an epistle preserved by Chrysostom, speaking of certain crimes, says, that they could not be wiped out even by the blood of martyrdom. He also wishes that his own sufferings might be accepted as a *purification*, and *price of redemption* for them (*περίσφημα καὶ ἀντίλυτρον*) ‡.

Origen says, “ Christ has laid down his life for us. Let us also lay down our lives, I will not say for him, but for ourselves, and for those, who may be edified by our martyrdom. And perhaps as we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, Jesus having received a name above every name, so some may be redeemed

\* Ib. p. 636. † Lardner's Credibility, vol. x. p. 303.

‡ Le Clerc's Historia Eccl. A. D. 116.



“by the blood of the martyrs \*.” And yet this writer says, “Christ offered his own life not unlike those, who of their own accord, devoted themselves to death to deliver their country from some pestilence, &c. †.” As this language could only be figurative in this writer, we may conclude, that it is no otherwise to be interpreted when we meet with it in other writers of those times.

5. The great virtue which the ancient Fathers ascribed to *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*, with respect to the forgiveness of sins, shews plainly, that they did not consider the wrath of God as pacified by the death of Christ once for all. And though the Lord's supper was a commemoration of the death of Christ, it is plain that they did not consider the administration of it merely as an application of his merits or sufferings to themselves; but as having a virtue independent of that, a virtue originating from the time of the celebration. This will be abundantly evident when I come, in the course of this work, to shew the abuses of those institutions. However, what they say concerning baptism will not admit of such an interpretation as some persons, not well acquainted with their writings, might be disposed to put on similar expressions relating to the eucharist.

Among others, Tertullian frequently speaks of baptism as washing away the guilt of sin. In several of the ancient liturgies, particularly that of Chrysostom, the priest prays that the eucharist may serve for the remission of sins and the communication of the Holy Spirit. It is well known, that at length, the church of Rome, in pursuance of the same train of thinking, came to consider the eucharist to be as proper a *sacrifice* as the death of Christ itself, and as having the same original independent virtue.

6. Many of the ancient writers, in imitation of the author of the epistle of the Hebrews, call the death of Christ a *sacrifice*, and also say that it was prefigured by the sacrifices under the Law. But that this was no fixed determinate view of the subject with them, is evident from their language upon other occasions; espe-

\* Lardner's Credibility, vol. v. p. 226.

† Contra Celsum, p. 24.



cially when, like the prophets of old, they oppose *good works* and not *the death of Christ*, to the sacrifices under the Law, as being of more value than they were.

Lactantius, in his *Epitome of Divine Institutions*, speaking of sacrifices, says \*, “the true sacrifice is “that which is brought from the heart,” meaning good works. With respect to the same he also says †, “These are victims, this is a peculiar sacrifice which a “man brings to the altar of God, as a pledge of the “disposition of his mind.”

Though, therefore, in the Clementine liturgy, contained in the *Apostolical Constitutions* ‡, Christ is called a *high priest* and is said to be himself the *sacrifice*, the *shepherd*, and also the *sheep*, “to appease his God and “Father, to reconcile him to the world, and to deliver all men from the impending wrath,” we must not infer (notwithstanding in these general terms, this writer seems to express even the proper principle of the doctrine of atonement) that, if he had dwelt longer on the subject, he would have been uniform in his representations. If this *was* the opinion of the author of that liturgy, and those who made use of it, it did not generally prevail. For the principles of that doctrine will very clearly appear to have been altogether unknown to the most eminent writers of that age.

One might have imagined that when Justin Martyr says that §, Christ took (εἰληφεν) the sins of “men,” his idea had been that he made himself responsible for them. But the tenor of all his writings shews that he was very far from having any such idea. He will not even admit that, in any proper sense, Christ can be considered as having been made *a curse* for us. He says ||, that “when in the Law they are said to be accursed who were crucified, we are not to suppose “that the curse of God lies against Christ, by whom “he saves those who have done things worthy of a “curse.” Again he says, “if the Father of all chose “that his Christ should receive (αναλαβεῖν) the “curse of all men (that is, be cursed or hated by all “men) knowing that he would raise him again after “he was crucified and dead, will you consider him

\* Cap. lviii. p. 173. † Cap. lxvii. p. 215. ‡ Brett's Edit. p. 8.  
§ Apol. 1. Edit. Thirlby, p. 73. || Dial. Ib. p. 345.



“who endured these things, according to his Father’s will, as accursed?”

Austin says\*, “Christ took their punishment but not their guilt.” And again, “by taking their punishment and not their guilt, he abolished both the guilt and the punishment.” But it is to be considered, as was observed above, that Austin was certainly ignorant of the *principle* of the doctrine of atonement; so that we can only suppose him to have meant that Christ suffered upon our account, and for our benefit; and though if he had not suffered, we must, it would have been not *directly*, but by *remote consequence*. His saying that Christ did not take the *guilt* of our sins, shews clearly that he had no idea of his bearing our sins in the common acceptation of the word, so as to make himself answerable for them; and therefore he could not, in a proper sense, be said to take the punishment of them.

7. When the ancient christian writers do speak of the mission and death of Christ, as reversing the effects of sin, and restoring things to the same state in which they were before the fall, so as to make man once more immortal, their idea was not that this was effected by procuring the pardon even of that sin of Adam, by which death was entailed upon his posterity; but by means of Christ doing (which indeed they did not clearly explain) what Adam was not able to do. “For this reason,” says Irenæus†, “was the word of God made man, and he who was the son of God, became the son of man, that man, being mixed with the word of God, he might, by receiving the adoption, become the son of God. For we could not otherwise receive immortality, unless we were united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be united to incorruptibility and immortality, unless that which we are had become incorruptible and immortal; that so, what was corruptible, might be absorbed by what was incorruptible, and what was mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons?”

\* Grotius De Satisfactione, Opera vol. iv. p. 345.

† Lib. iii. cap. xxi. p. 249.



I am far from pretending to explain, and much less to defend this passage of Irenæus. But it is evident, that it is not capable of receiving any light from the principle of the doctrine of atonement. If this writer had had the same idea that many now have of it, he could not have been so embarrassed on the subject.

The same general object of the death of Christ is expressed by Lactantius, but without annexing to it any particular explanation, in the following passage of his *Epitome* \*. “Therefore the supreme Father ordered  
 “him to descend upon earth, and put on a human body,  
 “that being subject to the passions of the flesh, he  
 “might teach virtue and patience, not by words only,  
 “but also by actions. Wherefore he was born again of  
 “a virgin, without a father, as a man, that, as when  
 “he was created by God alone, in his first spiritual  
 “nativity, he was made a holy spirit, so being born of  
 “his mother alone, in his second carnal nativity, he  
 “might become holy flesh; that by his means the flesh  
 “which had been subject to sin, might be delivered  
 “from death.”

Athanasius did plainly consider Christ as dying in the place of men who were subject to death. But he does not say that it was to satisfy the justice of God for their sins, but to procure the resurrection of mankind in general, the wicked as well as the righteous, to a future life; which is by no means the idea of those who now maintain the doctrine of atonement, though it may be said to be an approach towards it.

“It was,” says he †, “an instance of his love to  
 “mankind, that both instead of the death of all men  
 “before, the law which related to that mortality,  
 “might be disannulled, as having its power entirely  
 “satisfied in the Lord’s body, and so had no more place  
 “against the rest of mankind; and also, that he might  
 “recover and revive those men that were returning to  
 “corruption from death, by making their bodies his  
 “own, and by the grace of the resurrection; and so  
 “might extinguish the power of death with respect to  
 “them, as stubble is plucked out of the fire. For the  
 “word being conscious that the mortality of all men

\* Cap. xliii. p. 113. † Opera, vol. i. p. 61.



“ could not otherwise be put an end to than by the dy-  
 “ ing of all men, and it being impossible that the word,  
 “ which was immortal, and the Son of the Father,  
 “ should die ; for this cause he took to himself a body  
 “ that could die, that the same body, by partaking of  
 “ that word, which was over all, might be an equiva-  
 “ lent for the death of all, and yet might afterwards  
 “ continue incorruptible, on account of the word that  
 “ was the inhabitant, and so corruption might after-  
 “ wards cease from all men by the grace of the resur-  
 “ rection.” Also in the liturgy ascribed to Nestorius,  
 Christ is said \* to have “ undergone for men the pu-  
 “ nishment due to their sins, giving himself to die for  
 “ all whom death had dominion over.”

It is evident, from all these passages, that these writers had no idea of Christ’s so suffering for men, as to endure for them any part of the punishment that was to be inflicted in a future world, but only to procure the reversion of the sentence passed upon men in consequence of the fall of Adam ; so far, that, though all men should actually die, they should not continue subject to death, but have the benefit of a resurrection.

8. It appears, that by some means or other, probably the too literal interpretation of the figurative language of scripture, such an advance was made towards the doctrine of atonement, in the period of which I am now treating, that it was generally supposed that the death of Christ was a *price* paid for our redemption from the power of death, and that without it there would have been no resurrection from the dead. But this system was so far from being completed, that these writers could not determine to whom this price was paid ; and in general it was agreed that it was paid to the *Devil*, to whom mankind had been given over, in consequence of the sin of Adam.

Origen was clearly of this opinion. “ If,” says he †, “ we are bought with a price, as Paul affirms, we  
 “ must have been bought from some person whose  
 “ slaves we were, who also demanded what price he  
 “ pleased, that he might dismiss from his power those  
 “ which he held. But it was the devil that held us.

\* Brett, p. 94.

† Opera, vol. ii. p. 486.



“ For to him we had been given over for our sins.  
 “ Wherefore, he demanded the blood of Christ as the  
 “ price of our redemption.” He goes on to observe,  
 “ that till the blood of Christ was given, which was  
 “ so precious that it alone could suffice for the redemp-  
 “ tion of all, it was necessary for all those who were  
 “ under the Law to give each his own blood, in a kind  
 “ of imitation of a future redemption; and therefore  
 “ that we, for whom the price of Christ’s blood is  
 “ paid, have no occasion to offer a price for ourselves,  
 “ that is *the blood of circumcision*.” In this place,  
 therefore, he supposes that the rite of circumcision, and  
 not the sacrifice of animals, was intended to prefigure  
 the death of Christ, and to serve as a kind of tempo-  
 rary substitute for it.

This writer also compares the death of Christ to that  
 of those in the heathen world who devoted themselves  
 to death, to avert public calamities from their coun-  
 try. “ It is requisite \*, for some secret and incompre-  
 “ hensible reasons in nature, that the voluntary death  
 “ of a righteous man should disarm the power of evil  
 “ dæmons, who do mischief by means of plagues,  
 “ dearths, tempests, &c. Is it not probable, there-  
 “ fore,” he says, “ that Christ died to break the pow-  
 “ er of the great dæmon, the prince of the other dæ-  
 “ mons, who has in his power the souls of all the men  
 “ that ever lived in the world.”

This opinion, however, of the price of our re-  
 demption being paid to the devil, appears not to have  
 been universally acquiesced in; and Gr. Nazianzen  
 takes it up as a question that had not been discussed be-  
 fore; and after proposing several schemes, and not  
 appearing to be satisfied with any of them, he gives  
 his own opinion with considerable diffidence. “ We  
 “ may inquire,” he says †, “ into a fact, and an opini-  
 “ on, which had been over-looked by many, but which  
 “ I have diligently considered, viz. to whom, and for  
 “ what, was the blood of Christ shed. We were in  
 “ the possession of the devil, being sold to him for sin,  
 “ we having received the pleasures of sin in return.  
 “ But if the price of redemption could only be re-

\* Contra Celsum, p. 25. † Orat. xlii. Opera, p. 691.



“ceived by him who had possession of us, I ask to whom  
 “was this blood paid, and for what cause? For if it  
 “was paid to that wicked one, it was shameful indeed;  
 “and if he not only received a price from God, but  
 “God himself was that price, for such a price it was  
 “certainly just that he should spare us. Was the price  
 “paid to the Father? But how, for we were not  
 “held by him, and how could the Father be delighted  
 “with the blood of his only begotten Son, when he  
 “would not receive Isaac who was offered to him by  
 “Abraham? Or rather did the Father receive the  
 “price, not because he desired, or wanted it, but be-  
 “cause it was convenient that man should be sanctified  
 “by what was human in God, that he, by con-  
 “quering the tyrant, might deliver us, and bring us  
 “to him.”

The opinion which this writer mentions in the last place, and that to which we may, therefore, suppose he was most inclined, is that the death of Christ, is, in some manner, instrumental to our *sanctification*, that is, to our being made fit to be offered to God, and to be made his property, after having been in the power of the devil, but he does not say that it was for our *justification*. He, therefore, had no proper idea of what is now called the doctrine of atonement. Indeed, he expresses himself with so much uncertainty, that some may still think, he was, upon the whole, of the opinion of Origen, viz. that the price of our redemption was paid to the devil, but that it was more than he was fairly intitled to.

That the devil was the person to whom the price of our redemption was due, seems to have been the general opinion of speculative writers till the age of the schoolmen. Ambrose says\*, “we were pledged to a  
 “bad creditor, for sin. Christ came, and offered his  
 “blood for us.” This writer has a distinction with respect to our redemption by Christ, which is something curious. For he says, “the flesh of Christ was given  
 “for the salvation of the body, and his blood for the  
 “salvation of the soul.” I do not know that any of the moderns follow him in this. Optatus Milevitanus al-

\* Grotii, Opera, vol. iv. p. 344.



so speaks of the devil being in possession of mens souls, before they were redeemed by the blood of Christ\*.

Austin writes so fully on this subject, and his opinions in general acquired such an ascendancy in the western church, for many centuries after his death, that I shall give a larger extract from his writings. "What," says he †, "is the power of that blood, "in which if we believe we shall be saved, and what "is the meaning of being reconciled by the death of "his Son? Was God the Father so angry with us, "that he could not be pacified without the death of his "Son? By the justice of God the race of man was "delivered to the devil; the sin of the first man being transferred to all his posterity, the debt of their "first parents binding them: not that God did it, or "ordered it, but he permitted them to be so delivered. "But the goodness of God did not forsake them, though "in the devil's power, nor even the devil himself, for "he lives by him. If, therefore, the commission of "sin, through the just anger of God, subjects man to "the power of the devil, the remission of sins, by the "gracious forgiveness of God, delivers man from the "devil. But the devil was not to be overcome by the "power, but by the justice of God; and it pleased "God, that in order to deliver man from the power "of the devil, the devil should be overcome not by "the power, but by justice. What then is the justice" (or rather the *righteousness*) "by which the devil was "conquered? what but the righteousness of Jesus "Christ? And how is he conquered? because, though "there was in him nothing worthy of death, he (that "is the devil) killed him. Was not then the devil to "have been fairly conquered, though Christ had acted "by power, and not by righteousness? But he postponed "what he *could* do in order to do what *ought to be done*. "Wherefore it was necessary for him to be both God "and man; man that he might be capable of being "killed; and God to shew that it was voluntary in him. "What could shew more power than to rise again, "with the very flesh in which he had been killed. He,

\* Opera, p. 80.

† De Trinitate, lib. xiii. cap. xi. Opera, vol. iii. p. 414.



“therefore, conquered the devil twice, first by righteousness, and then by power.” He also says\*, “the blood of Christ is given as a price, and yet the devil having received it, is not enriched, but bound by it, that we might be delivered from his bonds.”

This last quotation contains an antithesis of which all the writers of that age were too fond, and to which they sometimes sacrificed more than they ought to have done. From the same fondness for antithesis, without perhaps intending to be understood in the manner in which his expressions will now be naturally understood by many, he says †, “Christ alone suffered punishment without bad deserts, that by him we might obtain favour with good deserts.”

Proclus of Constantinople also, a writer of the same age, but somewhat later than Austin, considered the price of our redemption as paid to the devil. “The devil,” he says ‡, “held us in a state of servitude, boasting that he had bought us. It was necessary, therefore, that all being condemned, either they should be dragged to death, or a sufficient price be paid; and because no angel had wherewithal to pay it, it remained that God should die for us.”

9. Lastly, nothing, perhaps, can shew more clearly how far the primitive christians were from entertaining the idea that many now do concerning the efficacy of the death of Christ, as instrumental to the pardon of all sin, than their interpretation of some of those texts in which the doctrine of atonement is now supposed to be contained.

Clemens Alexandrinus explains Rom. iv. 25, *he was delivered for our offences*, by saying that Christ was the corrector and director of sinners, so that he alone can forgive sins, being appointed a pedagogue by the universal Father §. He explains Matt. xxvi. 28. in which our Lord calls the wine, *his blood which he shed for many* ||, “by his words or doctrine, which was poured out for many, for the remission of sins,” and he interprets what our Lord says in the 6th chapter of

\* Page 417. † Contra duas epist. Pel. lib. iv. cap. iv. vol. vii. p. 915. ‡ Grotii, Opera, vol. iv. p. 346. § Pæd. lib. i. Opera, p. 110. || Page 158.



John's gospel, about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, of faith and hope, which supports the soul \*, and to prove that blood may represent word or doctrine, he alleges Gen. iv. 10, in which it is said, the blood of Abel cried unto God.

Upon the whole, I think it must appear sufficiently evident, that the proper doctrine of atonement was far from being settled in the third or fourth centuries, though some little approach was made towards it, in consequence of supposing that what is called a *ransom* in a figurative sense, in the New Testament, was something more than a figure; and therefore that the death of Christ was truly a *price paid for our redemption*, not indeed directly from *sin*, but rather from *death*, though it was not settled to *whom* this price was paid. In general the writers of those times rather seem to have considered God as the person who paid the price, than he that received it. For, man being delivered into the power of the devil, they considered the price of redemption as paid to him. As to the forgiveness of sins, it was represented by all the Fathers, and even by Austin himself, as proceeding from the free grace of God, from which free grace he was farther induced to give up his Son, as the price of our redemption from the power of the devil. We must, therefore, proceed farther, before we come to any regular system of atonement, founded on fixed principles, such as are now alleged in support of it.

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## SECTION VII.

*Of the State of Opinions concerning the Doctrine of Atonement, from the Time of Austin to the Reformation.*

AFTER AUSTIN we find but few writers of eminence for several centuries, owing to the great confusion of the times; so that he being the last very considerable writer in the western church, his works went down too

\* Pæd. lib. 1. Opera, p. 100.



posterity with peculiar advantage, having no rival of any note. He was, therefore, considered as an authority, and his opinions were seldom disputed. But having himself formed no fixed opinion with respect to the doctrine of atonement, his doctrines of *grace*, *original sin*, and *predestination*, were not connected with it, as they now are. We shall find, however, that though not immediately, yet by degrees, something more like the present doctrine of atonement got established before the era of the reformation.

About two centuries and a half after Austin, we find Gregory the Great, who was the most considerable writer in his time. But he also was far from having any consistent notions on this subject. For at the same time that he insists upon the necessity of some expiation, he says, that our redemption might have been effected by Christ in some other way than by his death. He says \*, “The rust of sin could not be purged without the fire of torment; Christ therefore came without fault, that he might subject himself to voluntary torment, and that he might bear the punishment due to our sins.” But he says †, “Christ might have assisted us without suffering, for that he who made us could deliver us from suffering without his own death. But he chose this method, because by it he shewed more love to us.”

In Theodorus Abucara, a Greek writer of the ninth century, we find something more like the doctrine of atonement, than in any writer in the Latin church. Indeed, as far as the extract given us by Grotius goes, it is very express to the purpose. But how he would have explained himself if he had written more largely on the subject, I cannot tell. He says ‡, “God by his judgments demanded of us all things that are written in the Law; which when we could not pay, the Lord paid for us, taking upon himself the curse and condemnation to which we were obnoxious.” Again, he says §, “Christ, the mediator, reconciled us to God.”

In the Latin church, however, the doctrine of atone-

\* In Job. ii. Cap. xii. Opera, fol. 13. † In Job. xxx. cap. xxvi. Opera, fol. 123. ‡ Grotii, Opera, vol. iv. p. 347. § Ib. Page 348.



ment does not appear to have been fixed in the eleventh century; at least if we may judge of it by the writings of Anselm, who was one of the greatest theologians of that age, and one of the first who distinguished himself by that peculiar kind of acuteness of speculation, which was carried much farther some time afterwards, in what is called the age of the *schoolmen*. This, however, we may say, that all the ideas of Anselm on this subject, would not be adopted by those who are advocates for the doctrine of atonement at present. He says\*, "that of innumerable other methods, by which God, being omnipotent, might have saved men, he chose the death of Christ, that by it, he might, at the same time manifest his love to men." "Was the Father," says he, "so angry with men, that unless the Son had died for us he would not be appeased? No: For the Father had love for us even when we were in our sins." Yet he says†, "Human nature could not be restored unless man paid what for sin he owed to God, and that which Christ ought not to pay but as man, he was not able to pay but as God; so that here was a necessity that God should be united to man."

This seems, indeed, to be the proper language of the doctrine of atonement. But he afterwards expresses himself in a manner not quite so favourable to that scheme, for he says, "As Christ died without any sin of his own, a reward was due to him; and because he, being God, could not receive any additional happiness, the reward was bestowed on those on whom he chose that it should be conferred and on whom could he more justly choose; have it bestowed, than upon his relations and brethren whom he saw in so miserable a state; that that might be remitted to them which they owed for their sins, and that might be given to them, which on account of their sins they wanted."

Something more like the doctrine of atonement occurs in Theophilus, a Greek writer of the age of An-

\* Ad. Rom. cap. v. Opera, vol. ii. p. 31.

† Cur deus homo. lib. ii, cap. 18. Opera, vol. iii. p. 63.



selm. But the quotation from him in Grotius, is so short, that, as in the case of Abucara, I cannot tell how he would have explained himself if he had written more largely upon the subject. It may be observed, however, that as Grotius was professedly collecting authorities in support of the doctrine of atonement, he would not have omitted any thing that he had found more to his purpose. "The Father," says this writer \*, "was angry; wherefore Christ being "made a mediator reconciled him to us. How? By bearing "what we ought to have bore, viz. death." By this, however, he might not mean the *wrath of God in a future state*, but simply *death*, respecting the whole human race, which we have seen to be the opinion of the primitive Fathers. And this, indeed, might be all that Abucara intended to express in the passage above quoted.

In the following century we meet with Peter Lombard, the greatest authority in the school of theology before the appearance of Thomas Aquinas; but in him we find nothing more settled about the doctrine of atonement than in the time of Austin. This writer, in his book of *Sentences*, in which he meant to comprize the sum of universal theology, treating of the manner in which we are delivered from sin and the devil by the death of Christ, says †, "that in the death "of Christ the love of God towards us is made conspicuous, and by means of it we are moved and excited to love God, who hath done so much for us, "and thus we become justified, that is, being free from "sin, we become righteous. The death of Christ, "therefore, justifies us, because by means of it love is "excited in our hearts."

He adds, but more obscurely, that, "in another "manner also, we are justified by the death of Christ, "viz. because by faith in it we are freed from sin, "looking to it as the children of Israel looked to the "brazen serpent; so that though after the death of "Christ the devil may tempt us, as he did before, he "cannot conquer us as he did before. Thus Peter was "overcome by temptation before the death of his mas-

\* Grotii, Opera, vol. iv. p. 348. † Lib. iii. dist. xix. xx. p. 596.



“ter, but afterwards behaved with the greatest bold-  
 “ness before the jewish rulers.” Again, treating of  
 the manner in which we are delivered from punishment  
 by the death of Christ, he says, that “the penance en-  
 “joined by the church would not suffice without the  
 “sufferings of Christ, co-operating with it; so that  
 “the sins of good men before the death of Christ were  
 “borne with by God until that event.” He says,  
 however, “we are not to suppose that the death of  
 “Christ so reconciles us to God, as that he then be-  
 “gins to love those whom he before had hated; for,  
 “that God always loved men, and that he might have  
 “chosen any other method to redeem us from sin than  
 “by the death of Christ, if he had pleased; but that  
 “he chose this method because in this manner the devil  
 “is overcome not by *power*, of which he was a lover,  
 “but by *righteousness*, which he hated. For we being  
 “the captives of the devil, God might have released  
 “us by his authority only.” This is the same view of  
 this subject that was before given by Austin.

In this last quotation from Peter Lombard, we find  
 some remains of the old doctrine of redemption from  
 the power of the devil; but in Bernard, who was his  
 cotemporary, we find more of the proper doctrine of  
 satisfaction, but not very fully stated, and mixed, with  
 some principles not very consonant to it. Upon the  
 whole, however, his doctrine on this subject is nearer  
 to that of the moderns than any thing we meet with  
 before the reformation. He also speaks of *imputed sin*,  
 and *imputed righteousness*, more expressly, I believe,  
 than any who had gone before him. He says \*, that,  
 “since man, by sin, became obnoxious to two kinds of  
 “death, the one spiritual and voluntary, the other  
 “corporeal and necessary, God by his corporeal and  
 “voluntary death obviated both. Had he not suffered  
 “corporeally, he had not paid our debts, had he not  
 “suffered voluntarily, there would not have been any  
 “merit in it.” “God-man, says he †, “taking the  
 “punishment, and being free from the guilt, dying of  
 “his own accord, merits life and righteousness for  
 “us.” “Death,” he says, “is driven away by the

\* Ad Milites Templi, cap. xi. Opera, p. 837. † Ibid.



“ death of Christ, and his righteousness is imputed to  
 “ us. Shall the sin of Adam be imputed to me? And  
 “ shall not the righteousness of Christ belong to me  
 “ also? We are much more truly born of God accord-  
 “ ing to the spirit, than we are born of Adam accord-  
 “ ing to the flesh. A foreign righteousness,” says he\*,  
 “ is given to man who wanted his own. It was man  
 “ that owed, and it was man that paid. The satis-  
 “ faction of one is imputed to all.” But in all this he  
 is speaking of *natural death* only, and therefore he did  
 not in fact go beyond the ideas of Austin.

Notwithstanding this language, so exceedingly fa-  
 vourable to the doctrine of atonement, he speaks † of  
 the power that God and every person has, to forgive  
 sins committed against himself. “ Can I,” says he,  
 “ forgive an offence against myself? the Omnipotent  
 “ certainly can. We know, therefore, that Christ  
 “ can forgive sin by the power of his divinity, and we  
 “ cannot doubt of his willingness.”

The great oracle of the Latin church was Thomas  
 Aquinas; and his doctrine, we may presume, was that  
 which was most generally received in that church, and  
 retained till the time of the reformation. The fol-  
 lowing quotations from his *Summa*, shew, that his  
 doctrine of satisfaction was a mixed one. He says ‡,  
 that “ in consequence of sin man was a debtor to God  
 “ as a judge, and to the devil as a tormentor. And  
 “ with respect to God, justice required that man should  
 “ be redeemed, but not with respect to the devil; so  
 “ that Christ paid his blood to God, and not to the  
 “ devil. It was not naturally impossible for God,” he  
 says §, “ to be reconciled to man without the death  
 “ of Christ, but this was more convenient, as by this  
 “ means he obtained more and better gifts than by the  
 “ mere will of God.” He says that “ God might  
 “ have remitted the sins of men by his mere will, but  
 “ that it is more convenient to do it by the death of  
 “ Christ, on account of the various uses which it an-  
 “ swered at the same time, especially moral ones; and  
 “ among others he mentions our being thereby the

\* Epist. cxc. Opera, p. 1556. † Ad Milites cap. xi. Opera, p. 837.

‡ Part iii. Qu. xlviii. Art. vi. p. 120. § Ibid. Qu. xlv. Art. iii p. 111.



“ more excited to love God, and that Christ thereby  
 “ gave an example of obedience, humility and forti-  
 “ tude.” He says \*, that “ the guilt of sin is taken  
 “ away by the renovating power of grace, and the  
 “ punishment of Christ, as a man making satisfaction  
 “ to God.” He illustrates the merits of Christ with  
 respect to christians, by the idea of his being the head,  
 and they the body, as if, says he †, a man by means of  
 his hands should redeem himself from a punishment due  
 for a sin committed by his feet. Lastly, he maintained  
 that baptism, penance, and the other sacraments, de-  
 rived their virtue from the death of Christ.

It appears from these extracts, that the Latin church  
 was far from having any consistent doctrine of atone-  
 ment, though a great deal was ascribed to the death  
 of Christ. We shall find, in another part of this  
 work, that though the writers of this age admitted  
 the doctrine of Austin concerning *grace*, they were  
 not without expedients to make room for the doctrine  
 of the *merit* of good works, and even to provide a  
*fund of merit*, transferable to those who had it not, of  
 which the court of Rome made a most intemperate use.  
 This doctrine of *merit*, would naturally check the ten-  
 dency which the divines of that church might other-  
 wise have had, to perfect the doctrine of satisfaction for  
 sin by the death of Christ; and it was in opposition to  
 this doctrine of human merit, that Luther, and some  
 others of the reformers, laid the great stress which we  
 find they did upon the doctrine of the merit of Christ,  
 and the satisfaction made for our sins by his death.  
 With them, therefore, and with them only, shall we  
 find the doctrine of atonement completed in all its parts.  
 How this business stood in the Greek church, I have  
 had no opportunity of tracing; but from the few spe-  
 cimens I have given of it, it should seem, that their  
 opinions were nearer to those of our reformers than  
 those of the church of Rome.

It is very remarkable, that we find nothing like a  
*controversy* on the subject of this doctrine in all the  
 western church, quite down to the reformation; nor  
 do we find any thing of this kind in the Greek church,

\* Ib. Q. xxii, p. 57. † Qu. xlviii. Art. vi. p. 120.



except, that in the twelfth century, the emperor Emanuel Comnenus, exercised himself and his divines with this question, “in what sense it might be affirmed that an incarnate God was at the same time the offerer and the oblation \*?” But nothing of any consequence resulted from it.

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SECTION VIII.

*Of the Doctrine of the Reformers on the Subject of Atonement.*

THE first who separated from the church of Rome were the *Waldenses*, of Piedmont in the Alps. They seem to have had their origin from the time of Claudius bishop of Turin, who distinguished himself by his opposition to the worship of images, and other innovations of the church of Rome, in the tenth century. With them we find a general outline of the doctrine of atonement in the confession of faith, which they presented to the king of France in 1544; in which they say, that, “the Fathers, to whom Christ was promised, notwithstanding their sin, and their impotence by the Law, desired the coming of Christ to satisfy for their sins, and to fulfil the law by itself †.” But we find nothing of this subject in their older confessions. In general, however, it cannot but appear probable, that as the advocates of the church of Rome were inclined to explain away the doctrine of *grace*, and to introduce that of *merit*, those who wished for a reformation of the abuses of penance, purgatory, and indulgences, which were founded on the doctrine of *merit*, would lean to the other extreme, and lay great stress on the satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ alone.

Wickliffe seems to have been a firm believer of the doctrine of predestination, and also of the absolute

\* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 435. † Leger, Histoire. p. 94.



necessity of the death of Christ, in order to the forgiveness of sin, if his sentiments be faithfully represented by Dupin, who censures him \* for maintaining that God could not pardon sin without the satisfaction of Jesus Christ; that he can save none but those who are actually saved; and that he wills sin in order to bring good out of it. And Mr. Gilpin represents him †, as maintaining that “all men, as far as the merit of “another can avail, are partakers of the merits of “Christ.” This, however, is not very consistent with the doctrine of predestination.

But after the reformation by Luther, we find the doctrine of satisfaction, or atonement for sin by the death of Christ, reduced to a regular system, grounded on certain principles, and pursued to its proper extent. It cannot be said of the divines since that period, as it may perhaps be said of some before it, that what we meet with in them on this subject were only casual expressions, or hasty and unsettled thoughts, and that if they had written more fully and professedly upon the subject, they might, perhaps, have advanced what would have been inconsistent with it. There can be no doubt but that the principles of this doctrine were the real persuasion of many of the first reformers, that they considered it as an article of the utmost consequence, and that even the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was only a secondary consideration with respect to it. Since the reason of the incarnation of Christ, they say, was the giving merit to his sufferings and death, and to enable him to make an infinite satisfaction for sin, which was of infinite magnitude, and required nothing less to expiate it at the hands of a righteous and just God.

That the first reformers should so eagerly catch at this doctrine, and lay the stress they did upon it, may be accounted for upon two considerations. The first is, that the controversy began on the subject of *indulgences*, which were built on the doctrine of *merit*, and this was most effectually opposed by disclaiming merit altogether, undervaluing all good works, and building all hopes of future happiness on the perfect satisfaction that Christ has made to the justice of God for us, and his righteousness imputed to us.

\* History, vol. viii. p. 117.

† Life of Wickliffe, p. 66.



Another circumstance which contributed to give them this turn, was that Luther had been a friar of the order which bore the name of Austin. He was much conversant in his writings, and therefore would have a leaning not only to his doctrines of grace, original sin, and predestination, but also to this of satisfaction, which, though it was not properly advanced by Austin himself, had been gradually established on his general principles.

The doctrine of Luther and his followers on this subject, we see in the confession of faith, presented to the emperor Charles V. at Augsburg in 1530, where we find it asserted\*, that "Christ died to reconcile the Father to us, and that he might be a true sacrifice for the guilt not only of original sin, but also for all the actual sins of men."

This doctrine is more fully expressed in the Helvetic confession of the year 1536, and which was approved by all the protestant churches in Europe at that time. It is there declared †, that "Christ took upon him, and bore the sins of the world, and satisfied divine justice. God therefore, on account of the passion and resurrection of Christ only, is propitious to our sins, nor does he impute them to us, but he imputes the righteousness of Christ for ours; so that we are not only cleansed from our sins, but also presented with the righteousness of Christ, and being absolved from sin, we become righteous, and heirs of eternal life. Therefore, properly speaking, God alone justifies us, and only for the sake of Christ, not imputing to us our sins, but imputing to us his righteousness."

But the proper principle of this doctrine, as providing an infinite satisfaction for offences of infinite magnitude, is most fully expressed in the synod of Dort, held in 1618. "God," say they ‡, "is not only supremely merciful, but supremely just. But his justice requires that our sins, being committed against his infinite majesty, must be punished not only with temporal, but with eternal pains, both of body and mind; which pains we cannot escape till

\* Syntagma, p. 10.    † Ibid. p. 26.    ‡ Canon, i: ii.



“the justice of God be satisfied. But when we could  
 “not make satisfaction, God gave his only begotten  
 “Son to satisfy for us; and he was made sin and a curse  
 “upon the cross in our stead.”

Notwithstanding the satisfaction, thus supposed to be made to the justice of God, by the sufferings of Christ, it is evident that there must be some method of *appropriating* the benefit of these sufferings to individuals; for otherwise all mankind would have an equal claim to it. And since it would favour the doctrine of human merit too much, to suppose that the merit of Christ's suffering was always applied to persons of a certain character and conduct, advantage was taken of an expression of the apostle Paul, that we are *saved by faith alone*; interpreting it, as if it were something altogether independent of *good works*, or even of a good disposition of mind, which always precedes good works, and constitutes whatever merit they have. This application of the merits of Christ was, therefore, said to be made by something to which they gave the name of *faith*, but at the same time they disclaimed its being either of the nature of a *work*, or of *faith* in the usual sense of the word, viz. the *belief of a truth*. They therefore contented themselves with defining it by its *effects*; and this has been done, as might be supposed, very differently, and generally in figurative language, which conveys no determinate ideas, and therefore leaves the mind in great uncertainty, whether it be possessed of it or not.

In the Saxon confession \*, *faith* is defined to be “not  
 “the knowledge of any historical fact, but the embracing  
 “of all the articles of faith, and especially  
 “this, *I believe the remission of sins*, not to others only  
 “but to myself also.” It is also there called, “an  
 “acquiescing confidence in the mediator.” In the synod of Dort, it is called, an instrument by which we lay hold of “the righteousness of Christ;” and it is always supposed to be something that is imparted by God, and nothing which can be acquired by man himself. So also that *repentance* on which salvation is promised, is said, in the Augustan confession, to be

\* Syntagma, p. 57.



the free gift of God, and to be given not on account of any works that we have done, or may do.”\*

It is evident, that the more careful divines have been to explain *faith*, as something that is neither of the nature of a *work*, nor yet the proper *belief* of any thing, the more inexplicable and uncertain they have left it. In consequence of this, persons of a warm imagination more readily fancy that they have experienced this kind of *inward operation*, or *feeling*; while persons of more sober minds have often great doubts and distress on this account. This *act of faith*, as it is sometimes called, is also represented either as coincident, or the same thing with the *new birth*, without which no man can be called a child of God, or an heir of eternal life. But when the phraseology of scripture, and the reason of the thing, are considered, we cannot but be satisfied, that *faith* is the belief of the gospel, or of those historical facts which are contained in the writings of the evangelists, and that the *new birth* is that change of character and conduct which is produced by that belief.

This improved doctrine of satisfaction being held up by the reformers in opposition to the popish doctrine of merit, did not a little embarrass the divines of the church of Rome, among whom that doctrine had never been brought to any certain standard, so that there has always been room for great diversity of opinion on the subject.

In the debate about *imputed righteousness* in the council of Trent, it was agreed by all the divines, that Jesus Christ had merited for us, and that his merit is imputed to us; but Dominicus a Soto maintained that the term ought to be exploded, because neither the Fathers nor the scriptures ever used it, and especially because the Lutherans had abused it, affirming that imputed righteousness is the sole justification of man. He added, that it cut off all the necessity of satisfaction, and equalled the meanest of all saints to the blessed virgin†.

At length the council condemned certain assertions

\* Art. iv. † Hist. of the Council of Trent abridged by Jurieu, p. 122.



of Luther, especially that God converts those whom he will, even though they resist; and some in the writings of Zuinglius, viz. that in predestination and reprobation men have no power but only the will and pleasure of God; that the justified cannot fall from grace, &c \*. After much debating on the subject, the decrees of this council were so framed, that it was hoped they might have satisfied all parties. But in consequence of this, there was so much ambiguity in them, that they decided nothing; and the controversy among the catholics themselves went on just as before; persons of the most opposite sentiments appealing to the same decrees of this council.

Among other things it was determined by them, that the grace by which men are justified is merited by Christ †. And upon the whole it is evident, that their decrees are in favour of that set of opinions which is termed *orthodox*, in all the established churches among the reformed.

We are not to conclude that because this doctrine of satisfaction for sin by the death of Christ was held up by almost all the reformers, as an article of so great magnitude and importance, that therefore it was soon so reduced to a system, as that there was no diversity of opinion about it. Nay it appears that some very essential points belonging to it were then, and indeed still are, undetermined; and they are things of such a nature, as, in fact, leave great doubts with respect to the very foundation of the doctrine itself.

Calvin makes it essential to the satisfaction of Christ, that his death should be both voluntary (which indeed others had said before him) and also that he should be condemned in a court of justice. “Had Christ been killed,” said he ‡, “by robbers, or in a sedition, his death would have been no kind of satisfaction; but by being condemned before a judge, it is plain that he assumed the character of a guilty person.” I should imagine, however, that many very orthodox persons of this day would think, that there might have been the same merit in the death of Christ,

\* Ib. p. 130. † Dupin's History of the 16th Century, p. 50.

‡ Institutions, lib. ii. cap. 17. sec. 5.



with respect to his making satisfaction for the sins of men, if the malice of his enemies had brought him to any kind of violent death, though there had been no sentence of an iniquitous court of justice for the purpose.

It is now generally thought that the scene of Christ's meritorious sufferings, when he actually bore the sin of men, and suffered the punishment due to them, was either in his agony in the garden, or in his death upon the cross; but Calvin says\*, "nothing would have been done by the mere death of Christ, if he had not also afterwards descended into Hell, where he sustained that death which is inflicted by an angry God on the wicked." To this he applies what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says of Christ's *praying with strong cries and tears*, which he says was lest he should be swallowed up by the wrath of God as a sinner †. In another place, however ‡, he says that in general Christ takes our sins, and purchases righteousness for us by the whole course of his obedience. But this is a thing about which those who now believe the doctrine of atonement are not agreed §.

It is evident, however, that Calvin believed the real descent of Christ into hell, not for the sake of *preaching to the spirits in prison*, or, as the primitive Fathers understood it, to those who died under the old dispensation, but that he might there suffer the proper torments of the damned, and bear the wrath of God that had been merited by the sins of men. Yet he says ||, that "God was not really angry with Christ, though he made him bear all the effects of his anger." He would certainly, however, have been the proper object of God's anger if, as he maintains ¶, "the stain (that is the guilt) as well as the punishment of sin, was laid upon him, so that it ceased to be imputed to men." If God was neither displeased with men because their guilt was transferred to Christ, nor with Christ to whom it was transferred, what was the object of his anger, and how was his justice really satisfied?

A more difficult question, and to which it is impos-

\* Ib. sec. x.    † Sec. xi.    ‡ Ch. xvi. sec. 5.    § See Doddridge's Lectures, p. 421.    || Institutions, lib. ii. cap. xvii. sec. xi.    ¶ Sec. vi.



sible that any satisfactory answer, should be given, is how the sufferings of Christ can be deemed *infinite*, so as to make atonement for sins of infinite magnitude, when the divine nature of Christ, to which alone infinity belongs, is impassible, and his human nature could bear no more than that of any other man? It must be exceedingly difficult to conceive how any supposed *union* of the two natures can be of any avail in this case, unless, in consequence of that union, the divine nature had borne some share of the sufferings, which the scheme requires to be infinite, and this idea is justly disclaimed as impious. Osiander the Lutheran maintained that Christ, as man, was obliged to obey the law of God himself, and therefore that he made expiation for sin, as God; but Stancarus, another Lutheran divine, in opposition to him, maintained that the office of mediator belonged to Christ as man only \*. Both these opinions this writer says are dangerous. This is not the only case in which we see men bewildering themselves, and puzzling others, by departing from the plain path of truth and common sense.

Such, however, is the constitution of things, that we are not authorized to expect any great good, without a proportionable mixture of evil. The case of Luther, and of Calvin too, was such, that the reformation of the errors and abuses of popery could not have been expected of them, or of their followers, but on principles equally erroneous. Happily, however, other persons, unconnected with them, were able, even at that time, to hit the happy medium between the popish doctrine of *merit*, as a foundation for the abuses of penance, indulgences, &c. and that of the total *insignificance of good works* to procure the favour of God. If by our good works we can procure the favour of God to ourselves, which is the uniform language of the scripture, and yet no portion of one person's merit be considered as capable of being transferred to another (which, indeed, is in the nature of things impossible) the very foundation of the popish doctrine of *supererogation*, and consequently of *indulgences*, is over-

\* Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 47.



turned; and yet no one false or dangerous principle is introduced in its place.

Faustus Socinus, who distinguished himself so much in recovering the original doctrine of the proper *humanity of Christ*, as to give occasion to all who now hold that doctrine to be called by his name, saw clearly the absurdity of what was advanced by the other reformers concerning satisfaction being made to the justice of God by the death of Christ. Indeed, it immediately follows from his principles, that Christ being only a man, though ever so innocent, his death could not, in any proper sense of the word, atone for the sins of other men. He was, however, far from abandoning the doctrine of *redemption* in the scripture sense of the word, that is, of our deliverance from the guilt of sin by his gospel, as promoting repentance and reformation, and from the punishment due to sin, by his power of giving eternal life to all who obey him. But, indeed, if God himself freely forgives the sins of men upon their repentance, there could be no occasion, properly speaking, for any thing farther being done to avert the punishment with which they had been threatened. What he says on the subject is as follows.

“ We are saved, however, from the punishment of  
“ our sins by Christ, because by his great power in  
“ heaven and earth, he brings it about, that no punish-  
“ ment can reach us; and by the same power he will  
“ accomplish our entire and perpetual freedom from  
“ death, which is the wages of sin, and its principal  
“ and peculiar punishment. But this method of rescu-  
“ ing us from the punishment of our sins is very differ-  
“ ent from that which implies a satisfaction for them.  
“ —Nothing can be more repugnant to each other  
“ than the freedom of pardon and satisfaction. Indeed,  
“ no man of judgment and piety ought to entertain  
“ the idea of satisfaction for sin; since it plainly does  
“ very much derogate from the power and authority,  
“ or the goodness and mercy of God \*.”

He farther observes, that though John the baptist when he ascribes to Christ the *taking away of sin*, calls

\* Toulmin's Life of Socinus, p. 186.



him a *lamb*, and that mode of expression alluded to the expiatory sacrifices in the Law, yet he apprehends that in this the baptist alluded to his *whole character*, as in several methods Christ takes away the sins of the world. In support of this he alleges, that in the expiatory sacrifices of the Law, those which were expressly offered for sin, no *lamb* was sacrificed \*.

Grotius, having written a treatise in defence of the doctrine of satisfaction, against Socinus, gave occasion to a most excellent answer by Crellius, in defence of the Socinian doctrine on this subject; and to this, Grotius did not think proper to make any reply.

In England, this doctrine of atonement seems to have got as firm possession of the minds of men, as that of the divinity of Christ. It is the doctrine of the established churches of England and Scotland, and is retained, at least in some qualified sense, even by many who do not hold the divinity of Christ, at least those who are styled Arians. For, that a Socinian should hold this doctrine, in any sense, is hardly possible. We are not, however, to expect a sudden and effectual reformation in this or in any other capital article of the corruption of christianity.

To establish this article was a work as we have seen, of long time, and therefore we must be content if the overthrow of it be gradual also. Great buildings do not often fall at once, but some apartments will still be thought habitable, after the rest are seen to be in ruins. It is the same with great *systems of doctrine*, the parts of which have long gone together. The force of evidence obliges us at first to abandon some *one* part of them only, and we do not immediately see that, in consequence of this we ought to abandon others, and at length the *whole*. And indeed, could this have been seen from the beginning, it would have been with much more difficulty that we should have been prevailed upon to abandon any part. The very proposal might have staggered us; and any doubt with respect to the whole, might have been followed by universal scepticism. It hath pleased divine providence, therefore, to open the minds of men by easy degrees, and the de-

\* *Ib.* p. 194.



tection of one fallshood prepares us for the detection of another, till, before we are aware of it, we find no trace left of the immense, and seemingly well compacted system. Thus by degrees we can reconcile ourselves to abandon all the parts, when we could never have thought of giving up the whole.

There are many who can by no means think that God has, in a proper sense, accepted of the death of Christ in lieu of that of all men (having no idea of the possibility of *transferring guilt*, and consequently of transferring punishment) who yet think that the death of Christ serves to shew the divine displeasure at sin, in such a manner, as that it would not have been expedient to pardon any sin without it; and they think that the sacrifices under the Law had a real reference to the death of Christ in the scheme of the gospel; while others think the death of Christ was necessary to the pardon of sin, and our restoration to eternal life, in some method of which we have no clear knowledge, being only obscurely intimated in the scriptures, and therefore could not be intended to produce its effect by any operation on our minds.

In time, however, I make no doubt, but that an attention to what seems now to be ascertained with respect to the moral character and government of God, viz. that he is a being purely *good*, that in him, justice, is only a modification of benevolence, that he simply wishes the happiness of all his creatures, and that virtue is a necessary means of that happiness; that he is incapable of introducing any *unnecessary evil*, and that his displeasure at sin is sufficiently shewn by the methods which he takes to promote the reformation of sinners, and by the punishment of those who continue unreformed: these, I say, together with other considerations, suggested in the argumentative part of this division of my work, will in time eradicate whatever yet remains of the doctrine of atonement; a doctrine which has no foundation in reason, or in the scriptures, and is indeed a modern thing.

In fact, the only hold it has on the minds of many protestants, is by means of such a literal interpretation of single texts of scripture, as gives the doctrine of



transubstantiation a like hold on the minds of papists. Besides, it must, I am persuaded, lead many persons to think rationally on this subject, and especially to abandon all *middle opinions* with respect to it, to observe, as they must do if they give due attention to the language of scripture, that those particular texts on which they are disposed to lay so much stress, give no countenance to any middle doctrine. For they must either be interpreted literally, according to the plain and obvious sense of the words, which will enforce the belief of proper vicarious punishments, or they must be interpreted *figuratively*; and then they will not oblige us to believe the doctrine of atonement in any sense, or that Christ died a sacrifice in any other manner, than as any person might be said to be a sacrifice to the cause in which he dies.

It is now, certainly, time to lay less stress on the interpretation of particular texts, and to allow more weight to general considerations, derived from the whole tenor of scripture, and the dictates of reason; and if there should be found any difficulty in accommodating the one to the other (and I think there is even less of this than might have been expected) the former, and not the latter, should remain unaccounted for. Time may clear up obscurities in particular texts, by discovering various readings, by the clearer knowledge of ancient customs and opinions, &c. But arguments drawn from such considerations as those of the moral government of God, the nature of things, and the general plan of revelation, will not be put off to a future time. The whole compass and force of them is within our present reach, and if the mind be unbiased, they must, I think, determine our assent.

It is certainly a great satisfaction to entertain such an idea of the author of the universe, and of his moral government, as is consonant to the dictates of reason and the tenor of revelation in general, and also to leave as little obscurity in the principles of it as possible; that the articles of our creed on this great subject may be few, clear, and simple. Now it is certainly the doctrine of reason, as well as of the Old Testament, that God is merciful to the penitent, and



that nothing is requisite to make men, in all situations, the objects of his favour, but such moral conduct as he has made them capable of. This is a simple and a pleasing view of God and his moral government, and the consideration of it cannot but have the best effect on the temper of our minds and conduct in life. The general tenor of the New Testament is likewise plainly agreeable to this view of things, and none of the *facts* recorded in it require to be illustrated by any other principles. In this, then, let us acquiesce, not doubting but that, though perhaps not at present, we shall in time be able, without any effort or straining, to explain all particular expressions in the apostolical epistles, &c. in a manner perfectly consistent with the general strain of their own writings, and the rest of the scriptures.

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THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
Corruptions of Christianity.

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PART III.

*The History of Opinions concerning* GRACE, ORIGINAL  
SIN, and PREDESTINATION.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

NEXT to the opinions concerning the *person* of *Christ*, none have agitated the minds of men more, or produced more serious consequences, than those relat-



ing to the doctrines of *grace*, *original sin*, and *predestination*, which have so many connections, that I think it proper to treat of them all together.

That it must be naturally in the power of man to do the will of God, must be taken for granted, if we suppose the moral government of God to be at all an equitable one. He that made man, certainly knew what he was capable of, and would never command him to do what he had not enabled him to perform; so as to propose to him a *reward* which he knew he could never attain, and a punishment which he knew he had no power of avoiding. If it be worth our while to inquire at all into the government under which we live, we must begin with assuming these first principles. For, otherwise, we have nothing to do but to await whatever he who made us hath pleased to determine concerning us, nothing that we can do in the case being able to alter it.

Supposing, therefore, that God did not mean to tantalize his creatures, in the most cruel and insulting manner, every moral precept in the scriptures is a proof that man has naturally a power of obeying it, and of insuring the reward annexed to the observance of it. Now moral precepts, with express sanctions of rewards and punishments, abound in the scriptures; and men are even expostulated with, in the most earnest manner, and persuaded to the practice of their duty, by the most solemn assurances, that *God is not willing that any should perish*, and by repeated warnings, that their destruction will lie at their own door; the general tenor of the preaching of the old prophets being *turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way, why will ye die O ye house of Israel*. Also, every thing that is of a moral nature in the New Testament is uniformly delivered in the same strain.

Notwithstanding this, it hath been imagined that all these representations are to be accommodated to a system, according to which, the whole race of mankind received so great an injury by the fall of Adam, that from that time none of his posterity have been capable even of forming a good thought, and much less of doing all that God requires of them; and more



over, that they are all so far involved in the consequences of his fall, and his sin is considered as so much *their own* (he being their representative, standing in their place, and acting for them) that they are even properly punishable for it and liable on that account to everlasting torment, though they had never sinned themselves. It is believed, however, that God hath been pleased to save certain individuals of mankind from this general ruin, but that it was not from any respect to the better character or conduct of such individuals, but of his mere *free and arbitrary grace*. It is also part of the same system, that every good thought and purpose, in the hearts even of those who are thus *elected*, is immediately inspired by God, and that without this continual assistance, to which they give the name of *grace*, no man has any choice but of evil, from the moment of his birth to his death.

It is not easy to imagine, *a priori*, what could have led men into such a train of thinking, so evidently contrary to the plain dictates of reason, and the most natural interpretation of scripture. There is, indeed, an appearance of *humility* in ascribing every thing that is good to God; but to ascribe to him, as all men must do, those *powers* by which we are enabled to perform good works, comes, in fact, to the same thing. *What have we, as the apostle says, that we have not received?* How then are we the less indebted to God, whether *he works all our works in us, and for us*, by his own immediate agency, or, he does it *mediately*; that is, by means of those powers which he has given us for that purpose? With respect to the character of the Divine Being, it certainly loses more by the idea of the predestination of the greatest part of mankind to inevitable destruction, than it can gain by the belief of an arbitrary interference in favour of a few. The whole scheme, therefore, certainly tends to make the divine character and government appear less respectable, indeed execrable.

In fact, it is probable that such a scheme as this, would never have entered into the mind of any man, who had been left to his own speculations on the subject, or to his study of the scriptures. Accordingly,



we find that the principal parts of this system were first suggested in the heat of controversy; and when the mind was once prepossessed in favour of some of the maxims of it, the rest were gradually introduced to complete the scheme; and the scriptures as in all other cases, were afterwards easily imagined to favour the preconceived hypothesis.

Indeed, the more amiable part of the system, or that which ascribes every thing that is good immediately to God, without respect to second causes, has considerable countenance from the piety of the sacred writers; but their language on this subject, will appear to be as *just* as it is *pious*, when it is rightly interpreted. Many persons, no doubt, will be more easily reconciled to the doctrine of *election* by previously imagining that they themselves are in the number of the elect; and while they can thus fancy themselves to be the peculiar favourites of heaven, they can bear to consider the rest of mankind, as abandoned by the same being to a severer fate. Also, in general, all men are sufficiently inclined to look off from the dark and most objectionable side of any scheme of principles which they adopt.

With respect to the fall of Adam, all that we can learn from the scriptures, interpreted literally, is that the laborious cultivation of the earth, and the mortality of his race, were the consequence of it. This is all that is said by Moses, and likewise all that is alluded to by the apostle Paul, who says, *that by one man sin entered into the world*. For what he adds *all have sinned* can only mean that all are involved in that *death*, which was the consequence of his sin. If, indeed, this be interpreted literally, it will imply that all are involved in his *guilt* as well as in his sufferings. But this is so unnatural an interpretation, and so evidently contrary to sense and reason (sin being in its own nature a personal thing, and not transferable) that the text was never understood in this sense till the system, the history of which I am writing, was so far advanced, as to require it, and to have prepared the minds of men for it. In like manner, the words of our Saviour, *this is my body*, were always understood to mean a *memorial* of his body, till



the minds of men were gradually prepared to bear a literal interpretation of them ; and then that interpretation was made use of to support the doctrine which suggested it.

In like manner, there is a *predestination* spoken of by the apostle Paul ; but, in general, it means the good will and pleasure of God, in giving certain people peculiar privileges, and especially the knowledge of the gospel, for the improvement of which they were answerable. If he does speak of *future glory*, as the consequence of this predestination, it was upon the presumption, that they improved those advantages, and by that means made themselves the proper subjects of future happiness. Or, possibly, in some cases the apostle considering God as the ultimate and proper author of every thing that is good, and of all happiness, might overlook the immediate means and steps, and with this sense of piety, and comprehension of mind, might speak of future glory itself, as the gift of God, and therefore might make no difference in his mind, at that time, between predestination and foreknowledge. But the tenor of all his writings shews, that it was far from being his intention to represent future glory as given by an *arbitrary decree* of God, without any respect to the good works which alone can fit men for it ; which good works are as much in a man's power, as any other action of which he is capable.

Having premised these general observations, I now proceed to shew by what steps these principles of the utter inability of man to do the will of God, as derived from the fall of Adam, the imputation of his sin to all his posterity, and the arbitrary predestination of some to eternal life, and the consequent rejection, or reprobation, of the rest of mankind, by which they are devoted to certain and everlasting destruction, were first introduced, and at length got the firm establishment they now have in the creeds of almost all christian churches.



## SECTION I.

*Of the Doctrines of Grace, &c. before the Pelagian Controversy.*

IT is remarkable that we find hardly any trace of what are now called the doctrines of *grace*, *original sin*, or *predestination* before the *Pelagian controversy* which was near the end of the fourth century. I believe all the moderns are agreed, that it was clearly the opinion of all the ancient Fathers, that God has left it entirely in the power of every man to act well or ill. Basnage, who was himself sufficiently orthodox in the modern sense of the word, acknowledges\*, that though the fathers in general thought that we are indebted to the grace of God for all our virtues, yet they say that the beginning of salvation is from man, and that it depends entirely upon himself. It is not denied, however, but that they might believe an internal influence upon the mind on extraordinary occasions; but, as Vossius observes†, none before Austin supposed that there was an immediate concurrence of divine grace, necessary to every good thought or action.

“God,” says Justin Martyr‡, “has not made man like the beasts, who can do nothing from choice and judgment; for he would not be worthy of reward or praise, if he did not of himself choose what was good, but was *made* good; nor, if he was wicked, could he be justly punished, as not having been such of himself, but only what he had been made.” In support of this he quotes Is. i. 16. *Wash ye, make ye clean, &c.* Basnage says§, that the ancients maintained free will with much warmth, granting men an entire power to be converted or not. Clemens Alexan-

\* Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. ii. p. 169. † Historia Pelagianismi, p. 291.

‡ Apol. i. Edit. Thirlby, p. 65.

§ Histoire des Eglises Reformées, p. 76.



Arinus and Origen, he says were the head of this party.

It is remarkable that Austin himself, before he engaged in the controversy with Pelagius, held the same opinion concerning free will with the rest of the Fathers who had preceded him, and he was far from denying this. In particular, he acknowledges \*, that before this time he had been of opinion, that faith, or at least the beginning of faith and a desire of conversion, was in the power of man. It was a saying of his †, “If there be not grace, how should God save the world, and if there be not free will, how can he judge the world. No man,” says he, “can be justly condemned for doing that which he was not able to resist ‡.” Citing a passage in the son of Sirach, viz. *God left man in the hands of his council, he placed life and death before him, that that which he pleased should be given him*, he says §, “Behold here is a very plain proof of the liberty of the human will, for how does God command, if man has not free will, or power to obey.” He also proves ||, that it is in our power to change the will, from these words of our Saviour, *Make the tree good and the fruit good, &c.*

We have almost the same unanimous opinion of the ancients, concerning the effects of the *sin of Adam*, as concerning the natural capacity of man with respect to virtue and vice, and they had occasion to speak to this subject very early, in consequence of the opinion of the Gnostics in general, and the Manicheans in particular; who held that the souls of men were originally of different ranks, and sprung from different principles, good beings having produced some of them, and bad beings the rest; on which account they said some were naturally *carnal* and others *spiritual*. Accordingly, they had taught that sin arose not from the free will of man, but from the substance of *matter*, which they held to be the only source of evil; so that some souls were wicked not by *choice*, but by *nature*.

\* De Predestinatione, lib. i. cap. iii, Opera, vol. vii p. 1235.

† Epist. xlv. vol. ii. p. 160.

‡ De Duabus Animabus, cap. x. Opera, vol. vi. p. 153.

§ De Gratia, cap. ii. Opera, vol. vii. p. 1299.

|| Contra Adimantum, cap. xxvi. Opera, vol. vi. p. 210.



In opposition to this, Origen maintained, that all souls were by nature equally capable of virtue or vice, and that the differences among men arose merely from the freedom of the will, and the various uses of that freedom, that God left man to his liberty, and rewarded or punished him according to the use he made of it\*.

It is evident, however that Origen must have maintained, according to his known philosophical principles, that perfect freedom with respect to virtue and vice was only enjoyed by man in his pre-existent-state. For he, with other Platonists, maintained that the souls of men had sinned in heaven, and therefore were united to such bodies as were a clog and a prison to the soul, and that the *flesh* laid upon it a kind of necessity of sinning. Chrysostom also says †, that with an infirm body we derive from Adam a proneness to inordinate affections. But he was far from supposing that men were in any other manner sufferers by the fall of Adam, and least of all that they were personally responsible for his conduct of himself. Le Sueur laments ‡, that this writer was not quite orthodox with respect to original sin, grace, and free will; but he apologizes for him, as having written before the heresy of Pelagius broke out.

The Fathers who, in general, held that the punishment of Adam's sin was only *mortality*, declare, that God subjected men to this mortality not out of anger, but from wisdom and clemency, in order to beget in them a hatred of sin, and "that sin might not be eternal in them §." But Titus bishop of Bosra, who was before Pelagius, taught that death was natural, and not the effect of sin ||.

Vossius acknowledges ¶, that Clemens Alexandrinus had no knowledge of original sin; and Epiphanius blamed Origen, and John of Jerusalem, for saying that the image of God was lost in man after the expulsion of Adam out of Paradise \*\*.

\* See his *Philocalia*, p. 50. &c. † *Opera* vol. ix. p. 136. ‡ A. D. 407.

§ Whitby on the Five Points, Preface, p. 9.

|| Basnage, *Histoire des Eglises Reformées*, vol. i. p. 167.

¶ *Historia Pelagianismi*, p. 160. \*\* Whitby, *Ib.* p. 391.



Austin himself, in his controversy with the Manicheans, declared that it is impossible that souls should be evil by nature \*. So far was he from supposing that men were responsible for Adam's conduct, that he said †, no man "is wise, valiant, or temperate, with the wisdom, valour, or temperance of another, or righteous with the righteousness of another."

The testimony of the fathers in this period is no less clear against the doctrine of *predestination* to eternal life, without respect to good works. All the Fathers before Austin, says Whitby ‡, interpreted what the apostle Paul says of predestination, in the 8th and 9th chapters of his epistle to the Romans, of those whom God fore-knew to have good purposes; and in a similar manner they explain all the other texts from which the doctrine of election and reprobation is now deduced: and Austin himself, in his controversy with the Manicheans, interpreted them in the same manner. Melancthon says that all the ancients, except Austin, asserted that there was some cause of election in ourselves §; and Prosper, who took the part of Austin, acknowledged that the Pelagians treated his doctrine as a novelty ||.

Justin Martyr could have no knowledge of arbitrary predestination, when he said ¶, "if every thing come to pass by fate, it is plain that nothing will be in our power. If it be fate that this man shall be good, and the other bad, the one is not to be praised, nor the other blamed."

Didymus, who taught theology at Alexandria (afterwards condemned for his adherence to Origen, but on no other account) says, that predestination depends upon God's foreknowledge of those who would believe the gospel, and live according to it \*\*; and Jerom was so far from believing the modern doctrine of elec-

\* De Duabus Animabus, cap. xii. Opera, vol. 6. p. 155, &c.

† De libero arbitrio, lib. ii. cap. xix. Opera, vol. i. p. 663.

‡ On the Five points, p. 100. § Ib. p. 103. || Ib. 102.

¶ Apol. i. Edit. Thirlby, p. 64.

\*\* Basnage Histoire, des Eglises Reformées, vol. i. p. 163.



tion and reprobation that he thought that no christians would finally perish.

It is sufficiently evident from these testimonies, that the doctrine of the utter inability of man to do the will of God, of the corruption of our nature by the fall of Adam, and of our responsibility for it, together with the doctrine of absolute unconditional election of some to eternal life, and of the reprobation of the rest of mankind were altogether unknown in the primitive church. We must now consider the Pelagian controversy, and the remarkable change which it occasioned with respect to these doctrines.

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## SECTION II.

*Of the Pelagian Controversy, and the State of Opinions in Consequence of it.*

PELAGIUS was a British Monk, allowed by Austin himself to have been a man of irreproachable morals, who travelled in company with Celestius, another monk and a native of Ireland, and with him resided some time at Rome, a little after the year 400. As far as appears, these two men had no opinions different from those which we have seen to have been generally held by the christian writers of that age; but being men of sense and virtue, they opposed with warmth some growing abuses and superstitions, especially with respect to the efficacy of baptism.

This rite, we shall find, was very soon imagined to have a power of *washing away sin*; and a notion of a similar nature had also prevailed respecting the Lord's supper. But it was the former of these superstitions that happened to come in the way of Pelagius to oppose. As an argument that baptism could not of itself, be of any avail to the pardon of sins, he urged the application of it to infants, who had no sin; he maintained that nothing but good works are of any



avail in the sight of God; and that to these alone, which it is in every man's power to perform, the pardon of sin is annexed.

It does not appear that these doctrines, which were the outlines of what has since been called the *Pelagian heresy*, met with any opposition at Rome. But retiring from that city on the approach of the Goths, these monks went to Africa, and Celestius remaining there, Pelagius proceeded to Palestine, where he enjoyed the protection of John bishop of Jerusalem, while his friend, and his opinions, met with a very different reception from Austin bishop of Hyppo; who, in his account of what followed, says he was first staggered at hearing it asserted, that "infants were not baptized for the remission of sins, but only that they might be sanctified in Christ\*," by which was probably meant, that they were dedicated to God, and destined to be instructed in the principles of the christian religion.

Upon this, Celestius and his friend were gradually engaged in a warm contest, in the course of which (as was certainly the case with respect to Austin, their principal opponent) they were probably led to advance more than had originally occurred to them, in order to make their system more complete. Among other things, they are said to have asserted that mankind derives no injury whatever from the fall of Adam, that we are now as capable of obeying the will of God as he was, that otherwise it would have been absurd and cruel to propose laws to men, with the sanction of rewards and punishments; and that men are born as well without vice as without virtue. Pelagius is also said to have maintained that it is even possible for men, if they will use their best endeavours, to live entirely without sin. This Jerom says, he borrowed from Origen, from whom it passed to Rufinus, Evagrius, Ponticus, and Jovinian, whom he calls the patriarchs of the Pelagian heresy.

Pelagius did not deny what may be called *external grace*, or that the doctrines and motives of the gospel are necessary, but he admitted nothing of *internal*

\* De Peccatis, &c. lib. 3. cap. vi. Opera, vol. vii. p. 725.



grace. He acknowledged, indeed, that the *power* we have to obey the will of God, is the gift of God to us; but he said that the *direction* of this power depends upon ourselves. He is even said to have advanced, after Titus of Bostra above-mentioned, that we do not die in consequence of the sin of Adam, but by the necessity of nature, and that Adam himself would have died if he had not sinned \*. Much farther was he from supposing that the *second death*, or the punishment of the wicked in a future world, was any consequence of the sin of Adam.

In several of these positions Pelagius appears to have gone farther than the generality of christians in his time, even of those in the East, where he met with the most favourable reception. He was particularly censured by Chrysostom and Isidore, for asserting that man had no need of any inward assistance, which was generally believed to be afforded, especially on extraordinary occasions, and that man had received no injury whatever from the sin of Adam.

Austin, in his controversy with the Pelagians, made no difficulty of renouncing many of the things which he had advanced against the Manicheans. Whitby says †, that he was not able to answer several of his former arguments, and that the exceptions which he made to some of his own previous maxims were weak and absurd. Thus he had before defined sin to be “the will to do that from which we have no power to abstain; but afterwards he said, he had then defined that which was only sin, but not that which was also the punishment of sin.

In opposition to the doctrine of human merit, he asserted that divine grace is necessary to bend the will, for, that without this we are free only to do evil, but have no power to do good.

As the heathens could not be said to have had that grace of God, spoken of in the gospel, by the help of which alone Austin supposed that good works were performed; to be consistent with himself, he maintained that none of the works of the heathens were

\* Austin De Hæresibus Sec. lxxxviii. Opera, vol. vi. p. 33.

† On the Five Points, p. 391.



properly good, and that even the good works of Cornelius would have availed nothing without faith in Christ \*. Sometimes, indeed, he would allow that the good works of the heathens would entitle them to a temporal reward, and lessen their future torments †. But he likewise distinguished himself by saying that such good works were only a kind of *shining sins*. In support of this doctrine, he said that Christ would have died in vain, if, in any other manner than by faith in him, men could have attained to true faith, virtue, righteousness, and wisdom ‡. But in this he did not attend to the doctrine of Paul, who says, that “ they who have not the law are judged without law; they being a law to themselves; their own consciences accusing or else excusing them.”

With respect to *original sin*, Austin strenuously maintained, that infants derive sin from Adam, and that his guilt was, in some way entailed upon them, so that they are obnoxious to punishment on account of it; though he acknowledged it was no proper guilt of theirs, but only that of their ancestor, the *sin* being an act of his will only §. Afterwards an improvement was made upon this doctrine by the disciples of Austin; who asserted that a covenant was made with all mankind in Adam, as their first parent, and that he was made to represent them all; so that, had he obeyed, all his posterity would have been happy through his obedience; but that in his disobedience they are all sinners, his act being imputed and transferred to them all.

Austin maintains that baptism is necessary to recover men from that state of perdition into which the fall of Adam had brought them, and therefore that all who were not baptized were in a state of damnation. To prove that infants had sinned in Adam, he urged, that otherwise Christ could not be their Saviour ||. He appears, however, to have been shocked at the thoughts of exposing infants to the torments of hell on account

\* De Baptismo, cap. viii. Opera, vol. vii. p. 379. † Epist. p. v. Opera, vol. ii. p. 25, Contra Julianum, lib. iv. cap. iii. Opera, vol. vii. p. 1033. ‡ Ibid. p. 1029. § Opera, vol. i. 22. || Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum, lib. i. cap. xxiii. Opera, vol. vii. p. 879.



of the sin of Adam only; and therefore he maintained, that though they were in hell, their punishment was so little, that they would rather choose to exist under it, than not to exist at all\*. This was afterwards dressed up as a division, or partition in hell, and was called *Limbus Infantum*. Before the Pelagian controversy, Austin had said that the souls of infants, dying unbaptized, went neither to heaven nor to hell, but went to a place where they neither enjoyed the vision of God, nor suffered the pains of the damned†.

Since, according to the preceding doctrine, the very first motion towards any good works, such as faith and repentance is immediately from God, and it is not in the power of man to contribute any thing towards it, Austin was obliged, in pursuance of his doctrine, to maintain that God had, of his own arbitrary will, predestinated to eternal life all that were actually saved, while the rest of mankind were left exposed to a punishment which they had no power of avoiding. At the same time, however, maintaining, according to the universal opinion of that age, that baptism was the christian *regeneration*, and washed away all sin, original and actual, he was under a necessity of distinguishing between *regeneration* and *salvation*; maintaining that justifying faith, and regenerating grace might be lost, or that the regenerate might have all grace, but not that of perseverance, since it depended upon the decree and good pleasure of God, whether they would persevere to the end or not‡. In this respect those who now maintain the doctrine of predestination differ very considerably from Austin, maintaining that none are truly *regenerated*, except the *elect*, and that all these will certainly persevere to the end, and be saved. In the church of Rome, however, and also in that of England, *regeneration* and *baptism* are confounded, and the terms are used as expressing the same thing.

Austin, whose influence in the churches of Africa was uncontrouled, procured the opinions of his ad-

\* Contra Julianum, lib. v. cap. viii. Opera, vol. vii. p. 1085.

† De Libero Arbitrio, lib. iii. cap. xxiii. Opera, vol. i. p. 695.

‡ Vossii Historia Pelagianismi, p. 565.



versary to be condemned in a synod held at Carthage in 412 ; but they prevailed notwithstanding. The Pelagian doctrine was received with great applause even at Rome. There the conduct of the bishops of Africa, who had stigmatized it as heretical, was condemned, and pope Zozimus was at the head of those who favoured Pelagius. Austin's doctrine of predestination, in particular, was not confirmed by any council within a century after his death, and though it was defended by the most celebrated divines in the West, it was never generally received in the East, and was controverted by many in Gaul, and the favourers of it explained it with more or less latitude. This controversy, which began with the doctrine of grace, and was extended to original sin and predestination, rent the church into the most deplorable divisions in all succeeding ages, and they have been continued, with little intermission, to the present time.

This controversy was, however, almost wholly confined to the western church, while the Greeks continued in the state in which the christian church in general has been represented to have been before the Pelagian controversy ; supposing that election, or predestination, was always made with a view to mens good works. Chrysostom, as well as John of Jerusalem, continued to hold opinions very different from those of Austin, though these were very soon generally received in the western church ; and just in the heat of this controversy, Cassian, a disciple of Chrysostom, coming to Marseilles, taught a *middle doctrine*, which was, that " the first conversion of the soul to God was the effect of its free choice," so that all *preventing*, as it was called, or *predisposing grace*, was denied by him ; and this came to be the distinguishing doctrine of those who were afterwards called *Semipelagians*. Prosper and Hilary, who were bishops in Gaul, gave an account of this doctrine to Austin, but it was so popular, that he did not venture to condemn it altogether, or to call it an impious and pernicious heresy \*. This controversy also interested many persons,

\* Basnage, *Histoire des Eglises Reformées*, vol. i. p. 192. Mosheim, vol. i. p. 427.



and much was written on both sides of the question.

The peculiar opinion of the Semipelagians is expressed in a different manner by different writers, but all the accounts sufficiently agree. Thus some represent them as maintaining that inward grace is not necessary to the first beginning of repentance, but only to our progress in virtue. Others say that they acknowledged the power of grace, but said that faith depends upon ourselves, and good works upon God; and it is agreed upon all hands, that these Semipelagians held that predestination is made upon the foresight of good works, which also continued to be the tenet of the Greek church.

The Semipelagian doctrine is acknowledged by all writers to have been well received in the monasteries of Gaul, and especially in the neighbourhood of Marseilles; owing in a great measure to the popularity of Cassian, which counteracted the authority of Austin, and to the irreproachable lives of those who stood forth in defence of it. Prosper writing to Austin about these Semipelagians, says, "they surpass us in the merit of their lives, and are in high stations in the church \*."

The assistance of Austin, though he was then far advanced in life, was called in to combat these Semipelagians, and it was the occasion of his writing more treatises on these subjects. In these he still strenuously maintained that the predestination of the elect was independent of any foresight of their good works, but was according to the good pleasure of God only, and that perseverance comes from God and not from man.

Notwithstanding the popularity of the Semipelagian doctrine, and its being patronized by some persons of considerable rank and influence, the majority of such persons must have been against it; for we find that it was generally condemned whenever any synod was called upon the subject. But there were some exceptions. Thus one which was assembled at Arles, about A. D. 475, pronounced an anathema against those who denied that God would have all men to be saved, or that Christ died for all, or that the heathens

\* Suet., A. D. 429.



might have been saved by the law of nature\*. Upon the whole, it cannot be said that the doctrine of Austin was completely established for some centuries; nor indeed was it ever generally avowed in all its proper consequences, and without any qualifications, till after the reformation, when the protestants espoused it, in opposition to the popish doctrine of merit.

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### SECTION III.

*Of the Doctrine of Grace, &c. in the middle Ages, and till the Reformation.*

IT is pretty evident that, notwithstanding the great nominal authority of Austin, whom it was seldom reckoned safe expressly to contradict, upon the whole the Semipelagian doctrine, may be said to have been most prevalent in England and in France, especially during the 6th and 7th centuries. All the *grace* that was generally contended for in this period, was that which they supposed to be imparted at baptism, or a kind of supernatural influence which did not fail to accompany or to follow mens own endeavours. Consequently, the operation of it in practice did not materially differ from that of Semipelagianism itself. All the difference in speculation was that, whereas Pelagius supposed the power of man to do the will of God, was given him in his formation, and was therefore properly inherent in him, as much as his bodily strength, that which was asserted by his opponents in these ages was something foreign indeed to a man's self, and imparted at another time, or occasionally, but still, in fact, at *his command*, and the doctrine of *reprobation* was never much relished.

In a council held at Orange in 529, against the Pelagians, and Semipelagians, it was determined that, "all those who have been baptized, and have received grace by baptism, can and ought to accomplish the things

\* Vossius, p. 696. Basnage, *Histoire des Eglises Reformées* vol. i. 699.



“ which belong to their salvation ; Jesus Christ enabling them, provided they will labour faithfully,” and not only do the Fathers assembled upon this occasion profess not to believe that there are men destined to evil or sin by the will of God, but they say, that, “ if there be any who will believe so great an evil, “ they denounce an hundred anathemas upon them “ with all detestation \*.”

In this state things continued, the Pelagian or Semipelagian doctrine being generally received, till about the middle of the ninth century. For, notwithstanding the credit of Austin’s name, and the authority of his writings, no books were more generally read in those ages than *Cassian’s Collections*, which was thought to be the best book of institutions for a monk to form his mind upon, and which gave a strong impression in favour of the doctrine of the Greek church. This was very apparent in the ninth century, when Godeschalchus was severely reprov’d by Hincmar for asserting some of Austin’s doctrines, and laying particular stress upon them.

This Godeschalchus was a monk of Orbais in the diocese of Rheims, who, being fond of Austin’s doctrines, carried them rather farther than Austin himself had done ; teaching, among other things, that baptism did not save men †, that God had predestinated the greatest part of mankind to damnation, and that none would be saved but the elect, for whom only Christ had shed his blood. In this he was oppos’d by Rabanus Maurus, and a council being held on the subject, at Mayence, and also at Creci, he was condemned, and at length died in prison. Remi archbishop of Lyons wrote in his favour, and maintained that Godeschalchus had not said that God predestinated the reprobate to sin and wickedness, but only that he abandoned them to their own free will, to be punished because they would not believe ; and in a council held at Valence in Dauphiny in which Remi himself presided, the decrees of the former council were annulled. But still the members of this council founded the doctrine of divine decrees on God’s prescience that the wicked would destroy them-

\* Sueur.

† Vossii Historia Pelagianismi, p. 734.



selves. We find no other decisions of any synod or council after this, and different opinions continued to be held on the subject \*.

When we come to the age of the proper *schoolmen*, it is somewhat difficult, notwithstanding they write professedly and at large on all these subjects, to state their opinions with precision, as they seem to confound themselves and their readers with such nice distinctions. In general, Austin being the oracle of the schools, his doctrine was professed by them all, even by the Franciscans, as well as the Dominicans. They only pretended to dispute about the true sense of his writings. His general doctrine with respect to grace and predestination was so well established, that we only find some subtle distinctions upon the subject, and some evasions of his doctrine by those who did not altogether relish it.

It was agreed among the theologians of this age, that infants are properly chargeable with the sin of Adam, and liable to damnation on that account, because the will of Adam was in some sort the will of the infant. Thomas Aquinas endeavours to prove that it was only the first sin of Adam that could be transferred to his posterity, and that vitiated all his offspring, his subsequent offences affecting himself only †. He farther maintains that original sin, being communicated in the act of generation, a person born miraculously cannot have it ‡.

According to some of the schoolmen, the power of man was but inconsiderable even before the fall. Peter Lombard says §, that “by the grace of God given to man, he could resist evil, but could not do good. “Free choice,” he says ||, “is the faculty of reason and will, by which with the help of grace, we can choose good, or without it evil.”

Thomas Aquinas not only asserted all Austin's doctrines, especially that of predestination, but added this to it, that whereas it was formerly, in general, held that the providence of God extended to all things, he thought that this was done by means of God's con-

\* Vossii Historia Pelagianismi, p. 734. † Summa, vol. ii. p. 166.

‡ P. 168. § Sententiæ lib. ii. dist. iv. p. 391. || Ib. p. 392.



curing immediately to the production of every thought and action. And, not to make God the author of sin, a distinction was made between the *positive act* of sin, which was said not to be evil, and its want of conformity to the laws of God, which, being a negation, was no positive being \*.

There is no small difficulty in settling the opinion of Thomas Aquinas about grace, though he writes so largely on the subject. He says †, that a man cannot even prepare himself for the grace of God without prior grace. Yet he says in general ‡, that a man must prepare himself for receiving grace and that then the infusion of grace necessarily follows. He also says §, that a man's free will is necessary to receive the grace by which he is justified. And yet he says ||, that it cannot be known to any person, except by revelation, whether he has grace. No modern fanatic can say any thing more favourable to the doctrine of instantaneous conversion than this writer does. "The justification of a sinner," he says ¶, "is in an instant," and again \*\*, that "it is the greatest work of God, and altogether miraculous."

The manner in which this writer, and other catholics make room for the doctrine of *merit*, together with these high notions concerning grace, which they never professedly abandoned, is not a little curious. "A man may merit of God," says Thomas Aquinas ††, "not absolutely, indeed, but as receiving a reward for doing that which God enables him to do." Yet he still acknowledges †††, that a man cannot merit the *first grace* either for himself, or for another, and that Christ alone can do this.

If Thomas Aquinas could find room for the doctrine of merit in his system, which was professedly built on that of Austin; it may well be presumed that the disciples of Duns Scotus (the head of the Franciscan order, as Aquinas was the chief of the Dominicans) and who opposed the doctrine of Aquinas as much as he could, were not less favourable to the doctrine of me-

\* Burnet on the Articles, p. 194. † Summa, vol. ii. p. 243.

† Ib. p. 250. § Ib. p. 252. || Summa, vol. ii. p. 251. ¶ P. 254.

\*\* P. 255. †† P. 257. ††† P. 258.



vit. Burnet says \*, that Scotus and the Franciscans denied the predetermination of the will, and asserted the proper freedom of it, and that Durandus denied that immediate concurrence of God with the human will, which had been asserted by Aquinas, but that in this he had not many followers except Adola, and a few others.

At length the members of the church of Rome, not only attained to a firm persuasion concerning the doctrine of merit, notwithstanding the slender ground on which it was built, but imagined that not only Christ, but also some *men*, and especially martyrs, and those who lived a life of great austerity, had even more merit than themselves had occasion for; so that there remained some good works in the balance of their account more than they wanted for their own justification. These they termed *works of supererogation*, and imagined that they might be transferred to the account of other persons. The whole accumulated stock of this merit was called the *treasure of the church*, and was thought to be at the disposal of the popes. Clement VI. in his bull for the celebration of the jubilee in 1350, speaks of this treasure as composed of “the blood of Christ, the virtue of which is infinite, of the merit of the virgin mother of God, and of all the saints †.” This doctrine was the foundation of those *indulgences*, of which an account will be given in another place, and the monstrous abuse of which brought about the reformation by Luther.

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#### SECTION IV.

*Of the Doctrines of Grace, Original Sin, and Predestination, since the Reformation.*

As good generally comes out of evil, so sometimes, and for a season at least, evil arises out of good. This,

\* Exposition of the articles, p. 194.

† Memoires pour la vie de Petrarch, vol. iii. p. 75.



however, was remarkably the case with respect to these doctrines in consequence of the reformation by Luther. For the zeal of this great man against the doctrine of *indulgences*, and that of *merit* as the foundation of it, unhappily led him and others so far into the opposite extreme, that from his time the doctrines of grace, original sin, and predestination, have been generally termed the *doctrines of the reformation*, and every thing that does not agree with them has been termed *popish*, and branded with other opprobrious epithets.

These doctrines, I observed, originated with Austin, and though they never made much progress in the Greek church, they infected almost all the Latin churches. We see plain traces of them among the Waldenses, who were the earliest reformers from popery. For, in the confession of their faith bearing the date of 1120, they say \*, “ We are sinners in Adam, and by “ Adam,” and in another confession, dated 1532, they say †, that “ all who are or shall be saved, God has “ elected from the foundation of the world, and that “ whoever maintains free will, denies predestination, “ and the grace of God.” Wickliffe also believed the necessity of man’s being assisted by divine grace, and without this he could not see how a human being could make himself acceptable to God ‡.

But if we were sufficiently acquainted with all the opinions of the Waldenses, and other early reformers, we might, perhaps, meet with many things that would qualify the seeming rigour of these articles. It is certain, however, that neither among the ancient reformers, nor among the Dominicans, or any others who leaned the most to the doctrine of Austin in the church of Rome, was the scheme so connected in all its parts, and rendered so systematical and uniform as it was by Luther and the reformers who followed him. Besides that Luther was led to lay the stress that he did upon the doctrine of grace, in consequence of the abuse of that of the doctrine of *merit* in the church of Rome, he had himself been, as was observed before, a monk of the order of Austin, and had always been a great admirer of his writings. Also most of those of the

\* Leger Histoire, p. 87. † P. 95, ‡ Gilpin’s Life of him, p. 75.



church of Rome who first opposed him were of a different persuasion; the doctrines of Austin having been either abandoned, or nearly explained away, by the generality of the divines of that age. Upon the whole, therefore, it was not to be expected, that such a person as Luther was, should begin a reformation upon any more liberal principles. The fact however, is notorious.

Luther, says Mosheim \*, carried the doctrine of justification by faith to such a length, as probably, contrary to his intention, derogated not only from the necessity of good works, but even from their obligation and importance. He would not allow them to be considered either as a condition or the means of salvation, nor even as a preparation for receiving it. He adds †, that the doctrine of absolute predestination, irresistible grace, and human impotence, were never carried to a more excessive length by any divine than they were by Luther. Amstdorf, a Lutheran divine, maintained, he says ‡, that good works were even an impediment to salvation. Flacius, another Lutheran, held §, that original sin was not an *accident*, but of the very substance of human nature.

In some of the first confessions of faith published by the Lutherans, and others of the first reformers, the doctrines of Grace, original sin, and predestination, are laid down with remarkable rigour, and a studied exactness of expression. The Augustan confession says ||, “ On the account of Adam’s sin we are liable to the “ wrath of God, and eternal death, and the corrupti- “ on of human nature is propagated from him. Thi, “ vice of our origin (*Vitium Originis*) is truly a damne “ ing sin, and causing eternal death to all who are no- “ born again by baptism and the spirit.” We find however, some expressions rather stronger than even these in the Gallic confession ¶. “ We believe that “ this vice” (*Vitium*) meaning original sin, “ is truly “ a sin, which makes all and every man, not even ex- “ cepting infants in the womb, liable in the sight of “ God, to eternal death.” If any doctrine can make a

\* Vol. iv. p. 36.      † P. 40.      ‡ Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 39.  
§ Ib. p. 43.      || Vol. iv. p. 9.      ¶ P. 80.



man shudder, it must be this. Believing this, could any man (unless he had a firmer persuasion than most men can, by the force of any imagination, attain to, of himself being among the number of the elect) bless God that he is a descendant of Adam.

Calvin held these doctrines with no less rigour; and as the Lutherans afterwards abandoned them, they are now generally known by the name of *Calvinistic doctrines*. The ancient Helvetic doctrines, says Mosheim\*, were Semipelagian. Zuinglius said that the kingdom of heaven was open to all who acted according to the dictates of right reason; but Calvin, when he came among them, maintained that the everlasting condition of mankind in a future world, was determined, from all eternity, by the unchangeable order of the Deity arising from his sole good pleasure or free will †.

Luther's rigid doctrine of election was opposed by Erasmus, who wished well to the reformation, but was concerned as well for the violence with which it was carried on, as for the unjustifiable length to which Luther carried his opposition, especially with respect to the doctrine of predestination. Luther never answered the last piece of Erasmus on the subject of free will; and Melancthon, the great friend of Luther, and the support of his cause, being convinced by the reasoning of Erasmus, came over to his opinion on that subject. And it is very remarkable, that by degrees, and indeed pretty soon afterwards, the Lutherans in general changed also; and some time after the death of Luther and Melancthon, the divines who were deputed by the elector of Saxony, to compose the famous book entitled, *The Concord*, abandoned the doctrine of their master, and taught that the decree of election was not absolute, that God saves all who will believe, that he gives all men sufficient means of salvation, and that grace may be resisted ‡.

The principles of all the other reformed churches are, however, still Calvinistic, and among them those of the churches of England, and of Scotland, notwithstanding the generality of divines of the former

\* Vol. iv. p. 73. † P. 89. ‡ Basnage, *Histoire des Eglises Reformées*, p. 265.



establishment are acknowledged to be no great admirers of that system.

In Holland, there was no obligation on the ministers to maintain what are called the Calvinistic doctrines till the synod of Dort; when, by the help of faction in the state, the Calvinistic party in that country prevailed, and those who opposed them, and in consequence of *remonstrating* against their proceedings, got the name of *Remonstrants*, were cruelly persecuted and banished. It is remarkable, however, as Mosheim observes \*, that since the time of that synod, the doctrine of absolute decrees has lost ground every day.

With respect to the church of Rome, it cannot be denied, that the cause of sound morality had suffered much by means of many sophistical distinctions, introduced by their divines and casuists about the time of the reformation, as by the distinction of sins into *venial* and *mortal*; the latter of which only, they say, deserve the pains of hell, whereas the former may be atoned for by penances, liberality to the church, &c. It was another of their tenets, that if men do not put a bar to the efficacy of the sacraments, particularly that of penance; if there had been but imperfect acts of sorrow accompanying them (such as sorrow for the difficulties a man brings himself into by his vices) the use of the sacraments will so far complete these imperfect acts of sorrow, as to justify us †. The Jesuits introduced several other exceedingly dangerous maxims with respect to morals; but they were never received by the catholics in general, and were sufficiently exposed by their enemies the Jansenists, within the pale of that church.

The Fathers of the council of Trent, found much difficulty in settling the doctrines of grace and predestination, many of the members, particularly the Dominicans, being attached to the doctrine of Austin. At length their sole object was to make such a decree as should give the least offence, though it should decide nothing. Among other things, it was determined that good works are, of their own nature, meritorious to eternal life; but it is added, by way of softening, that

\* Vol. iv. p. 427.

† Burnet on the Articles, p. 161.



it is through the goodness of God that he makes his own gifts to be merits in us \*. It is the opinion of many in the church of Rome, and seems, says Burnet †, to be established by the council of Trent, that remission of sins is previous to justification, and freely given by Christ; in consequence of which a grace is infused, by which a person becomes truly righteous, and is considered as such by God; but this, he adds, seems to be a dispute about words.

At the council of Trent, Catarin revived an opinion which was said to have been invented by Occam, and supported by some of the schoolmen, viz. that God has chosen a small number of persons, as the blessed virgin, and the apostles, &c. whom he was determined to save without any foresight of their good works, and that he also wills that all the rest should be saved, providing for them all necessary means for that purpose, but, that they are at liberty to use or refuse them ‡. This opinion was that of Mr. Baxter in England, from whom it is frequently with us, and especially the Dissenters, called the *Baxterian scheme*. Upon the whole, the council of Trent made a decree in favour of the Semipelagian doctrine.

At first Bellarmine, Suarez, and the Jesuits in general, were predestinarians, but afterwards the Fathers of that order abandoned that doctrine, and differed from the Semipelagians only in this, that they allowed a *preventing grace*, but such as is subject to the freedom of the will.

The author of this which is commonly called the *middle scheme* or the doctrine of *sufficient grace for all men*, was Molina, a Jesuit; from whom the favourers of that doctrine were called *Molinists*, and the controversy between them and the *Jansenists* (so called from Jansenius, a great advocate for the doctrines of Austin) has been as vehement as any controversy among protestants on the same subject. And though besides the council of Trent, whose decrees are copious enough, appeals were frequently made to the popes, and their decisions were also procured, the controversy still con-

\* Burnet on the Articles, p. 156. † Ib. p. 166.

‡ Basnage, Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. iii. p. 612.



sinues. Of so little effect is the authority of men to prevent different opinions in articles of faith. Different popes have themselves been differently disposed with respect to these doctrines; and on some occasions a respect for the Jesuits, who were peculiarly devoted to the popes, was the means of procuring more favour to the tenets which they espoused, than they would otherwise have met with.

Among protestants, there are great numbers who still hold the doctrines which are termed *Calvinistic* in their greatest rigour; and some time ago they were usually distinguished into two kinds, viz. the *Supralapsarians*, who maintained that God had originally and expressly decreed the fall of Adam, as a foundation for the display of his justice and mercy; while those who maintained that God only *permitted* the fall of Adam were called *Sublapsarians*, their system of decrees concerning election and reprobation being, as it were, subsequent to that event. But if we admit the divine prescience, there is not, in fact, any difference between the two schemes; and accordingly that distinction is now seldom mentioned.

It is evident, that, at present the advocates for the doctrine of absolute and unconditional election, with the rest that are called *Calvinistic*, consist chiefly of persons of little learning or education; and were the creeds of the established protestant churches to be revised, the articles in favour of those doctrines would, no doubt, be omitted. But while they continue there, and while the spirit of them is diffused through all the public offices of religion, the belief of them will be kept up among the vulgar, and there will always be men enow ready to accept of church preferment on the condition of subscribing to what they do not believe, and of reciting day after day such offices as they totally disapprove.

Things have been so long in this situation, especially in England, where the minds of the clergy are more enlightened, and where few of them, in comparison, will ever pretend that they really believe the articles of faith to which they have subscribed, according to the plain and obvious sense of them; and the



legislature has been so often applied to in vain to relieve them in this matter, by removing those subscriptions, that we cannot now reasonably expect any reformation of this great evil, till it shall please divine providence to overturn all these corrupt *establishments* of what is called christianity, but which have long been the secure retreat of doctrines disgraceful to christianity. For they only serve to make hypocrites of those who live by them, and infidels of those who, without looking farther, either mistake these corruptions of christianity for the genuine doctrines of it, or, being apprized of the insincerity of the clergy in subscribing them, think that all religion is a farce, and has no hold of the consciences of those who make the greatest profession of it. With all this within ourselves, how unfavourable is the aspect that these doctrines exhibit to the world at large, and what an obstruction must they be to the general propagation of christianity in the world.

I cannot help making this general reflection at the close of these three parts of my work, which relates to those gross corruptions of christianity, which exist in their full force in all established protestant churches. In what follows, the *Catholics*, as they are called, are more particularly concerned; though, it will be seen, that even with respect to them, many protestant churches are far from being blameless.



THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
Corruptions of Christianity.

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PART IV.

*The History of Opinions relating to SAINTS and ANGELS.*

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THE INTRODUCTION.

THE idolatry of the christian church began with the deification and proper worship of Jesus Christ, but it was far from ending with it. For, from similar causes, christians were soon led to pay an undue respect to men of eminent worth and sanctity, which at length terminated in as proper a worship of them, as that which the heathens had paid to their heroes and demigods, addressing prayer to them, in the same manner, as to the Supreme Being himself. The same undue veneration led them also to a superstitious respect for their *relics*, the places where they had lived, their pictures and images, and indeed every thing that had borne a near relation to them; so that at length, not only were those persons whom they termed *saints*, the objects of their worship, but also their relics and images; and neither with respect to the external forms, nor, as far as we can perceive their internal sentiments, were christians to be at all distinguished from those who bowed down to wood and stone in the times of paganism.

That this is a most horrid corruption of genuine christianity I shall take for granted, there being no trace of any such practice, or of any *principle* that could lead to it, in the scriptures; but it may be useful to trace the causes and the progress of it, from the ear-



liest ages of the christian church to the present time. And in order to do it as distinctly, as possible, I shall divide the history of all the time preceding the Reformation into two periods ; the former extending to the fall of the western empire, or a little beyond the time of Austin, and the latter to the Reformation itself ; and I shall also consider separately what relates to *saints in general*, to the *virgin Mary* in particular, to *relics*, and to *images*.

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## SECTION I. PART I.

*Of the Respect paid to Saints in general, till the Fall of the Western Empire.*

THE foundation of all the superstitious respect that was paid to dead men by christians, is to be looked for in the principles of the heathen philosophy, and the customs of the pagan religion. It was from the principles of philosophy, and especially that of Plato, that christians learned that the soul was a thing distinct from the body, and capable of existing in a separate conscious state when the body was laid in the grave \*. They also thought that it frequently hovered about the place where the body had been interred, and was sensible of any attention that was paid to it.

Christians, entertaining these notions, began to consider their dead as still present with them, and members of their society, and consequently the objects of their prayers, as they had been before. We therefore soon find that they prayed for the dead, as well as for the living, and that they made oblations in their name, as if they had been alive, and had been capable of do-

\* To give my readers full satisfaction on this subject, I must refer them to my *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit*, in which the doctrine of a *soul* is traced from the Oriental to the Grecian philosophy, and is shewn to have been a principle most hostile to the system of *revelation* in every stage of its progress.



ing it themselves. And afterwards, looking upon some of them, and especially their martyrs, as having no want of their prayers, but as being in a state of peculiarly high favour with God, and having more immediate access to him, it was natural for them to pass in time, from praying *for them*, to praying *to them*, first as intercessors to God for them, and at length as capable of doing them important services, without any application to the Divine Being at all. The idolatrous respect paid to their *remains*, and to their *images*, was a thing that followed of course.

The first step in this business was a custom which cannot be said to have been unnatural, but it shews how much attention ought to be given to the beginnings of things. It was to meet at the tombs of the martyrs, not by way of devotion to them, but because they thought that their devotion to God was more sensibly excited in those places; and few persons, perhaps, would have been aware of any ill consequence that could have followed from it. Indeed, had it not been for the philosophical opinions above mentioned, which were brought into christianity by those who before held them as philosophers, and which gradually insinuated themselves into the body of christians in general, it might have continued not only a harmless, but an useful custom.

Christians meeting for the purpose of devotion at those places, they would naturally bless God for such examples of piety and fortitude as the martyrs had exhibited, and excite one another to follow their examples. Indeed their very meeting together at those places for that purpose, was doing them so much honour, as could not fail, of itself, to make other persons ambitious of being distinguished in the same manner after their deaths.

It was also an early custom among christians to make offerings annually in the name of the deceased, especially the martyrs, as an acknowledgment, that though they were dead, they considered them as still living, and members of their respective churches. These offerings were usually made on the anniversary of their death. Cyprian says, that "if any person



“appointed one of the clergy to be a tutor or curator in his will, these offerings should not be made for him \*.” So that, as they considered the dead as still belonging to their communion, they, had, as we here find, a method of excommunicating them even after death.

The beginning of this superstitious respect for the martyrs seems to have been at the death of Polycarp, and in forty years afterwards it had degenerated into this gross superstition. For Tertullian says, “We make oblations for the dead, and for their martyrdom on certain days yearly †.”

Afterwards this respect paid to martyrs and *confessors*, or those who having been doomed to death happened to be released, exceeded all bounds, and in many respects did unspeakable mischief to the church. Nothing was esteemed more glorious than what they called the *crown of martyrdom*; and on the anniversary festivals instituted to the honour of each martyr, their memories were celebrated with panegyrical orations. In their prisons they were visited by christians of all ranks, proud to minister to them in the very lowest offices, and to kiss their chains; and if any happened to escape with life from their torture, their authority was ever after most highly respected in the decision of all controversies, in absolving persons from the ordinary discipline of the church, and restoring them to communion on whatever terms they thought fit.

As it happened that some of these *confessors* were not men of the best moral character, at least became corrupted, in consequence, perhaps, of the superstitious respect with which they were every where received, Cyprian makes heavy complaints of the relaxation of church discipline by this means. They were often exceedingly dissolute themselves, and screened the vices of others.

The respect paid to martyrs was gradually extended, in some degree, to others, who also were considered after their deaths as those who had triumphed over the world, and were gone to receive the prize for which they had contended. In imitation of carrying in tri-

\* Opera, Epist. p. 3. † Pierce's Vindication, p. 515.



amph those who won the prizes in the Grecian games, christians interred their dead with singing of psalms and lighted tapers. "Tell me," says Chrysostom, "what means the lamps lighted at funerals? Is it not because we accompany the dead, as so many magnanimous champions? What mean the hymns? Is it not because we glorify God, and render thanks to him, that he has already crowned the deceased, delivering him from all his toil and labour. \*"

As these festivals on the anniversaries of the martyrs were not in general use till long after the death of the most eminent of them, and particularly of all the apostles and their contemporaries, it was impossible to fix the dates of them except by conjecture; and we presently find that advantage was taken of this circumstance to appoint their celebration on those days which had been appropriated to pagan festivals. And as the christians of that age, introduced every mark of festivity on these occasions, that the heathens had been accustomed to in their former worship, there was no change but in the object of it; so that the common people, finding the same entertainment at the usual times and places, they were more easily induced to forsake their old religion, and to adopt the new one, which so much resembled it, and especially in the very things which had kept them attached to the old one. This circumstance would have growing weight in the time of the christian emperors, when the christian festivals becoming more popular, would be attended by greater numbers, which would add considerably to the entertainment. This was indeed, the avowed design of placing the festivals as they did; and Gregory Thaumaturgus, who lived in the third century is particularly commended by Gregory Nyssenus for thus changing the pagan festivals into christian holidays, allowing the same carnal indulgences, with a view to draw the heathens to the religion of Christ, that the new religion might appear less strange to them †.

As the christians had been used to meet, for the purpose of public worship, at the tombs of the martyrs;

\* In Heb. Cap. ii. Hom. iv. Opera, vol. x. p. 1784.

† Opera, vol. ii. p. 1006.



when the empire became christian they sometimes erected magnificent buildings on those places, and such churches were said to be built *to their honour*, and were distinguished by their names, as they continue to be to this day; and when they had not the martyrs themselves to bury there, at least they got some of their *relics*. And when most of the churches were distinguished in this manner, it was the custom to give names to others merely in honour of particular saints, angels, &c. Thus we have churches dedicated to St. Michael, to Christ, and the Trinity. In this manner by degrees, each remarkable saint had his proper temple, just as the heathen gods and heroes had theirs. This practice was approved by the greatest men of that age. Eusebius in effect says, Why should we not pay the same regard to our saints and martyrs, that Pagans paid to their heroes? \*

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## SECTION I. PART II.

### *Of Pictures and Images in Churches.*

TEMPLES being now built in honour of particular saints, and especially the martyrs, it was natural to ornament them with paintings and sculptures representing the great exploits of such saints and martyrs; and this was a circumstance that made the christian churches still more like the heathen temples, which were also adorned with statues and pictures; and this also would tend to draw the ignorant multitude to the new worship, making the transition the easier.

Paulinus, a convert from paganism, a person of senatorial rank celebrated for his parts and learning, and who died afterwards bishop of Nola in Italy, distinguished himself in this way. He rebuilt, in a splendid manner, his own episcopal church, dedicated to Felix the martyr, and in the porticoes of it, he had

\* Jortin, vol. iii. p. 146.



painted the miracles of Moses and of Christ, together with the acts of Felix and of other martyrs, whose relics were deposited in it. This, he says, was done with a design to draw the rude multitude habituated to the profane rites of paganism, to a knowledge and good opinion of the christian doctrine, by learning from those pictures what they were not capable of learning from books, or the lives and acts of christian saints\*.

The custom of having pictures in churches being once begun (which was about the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, and generally by converts from paganism) the more wealthy among the christians seem to have vied with each other, who should build and ornament their churches in the most expensive manner, and nothing perhaps contributed more to it than the example of this Paulinus.

It appears from Chrysostom, that pictures and images were to be seen in the principal churches of his time, but this was in the East. In Italy, they were but rare in the beginning of the fifth century, and a bishop of that country, who had got his church painted, thought proper to make an apology for it, by saying that the people being amused with the pictures, would have less time for regaling themselves†. The origin of this custom was probably at Cappadocia, where Gregory Nyssenus was bishop, the same who commended Gregory Thaumaturgus for contriving to make the christian festivals resemble the pagan ones.

Though many churches in this age were adorned with the images of saints and martyrs, there do not appear to have been many of Christ. These are said to have been introduced by the Cappadocians; and the first of these were only symbolical ones, being made in the form of a lamb. One of this kind Epiphanius found in the year 389; and he was so provoked at it that he tore it. It was not till the council of Constantinople, called *In Trullo*, held so late as the year 707, that pictures of Christ were ordered to be drawn in the form of men‡.

\* Middleton's Letters from Rome, p. 242. † Sueur, A. D. p. 401.

‡ Sueur, A. D. 707.



## SECTION I. PART III.

*Of the Veneration for Relics.*

CONSIDERING the great veneration which christians in very early ages entertained for martyrs, we are not surprized that they should pay a superstitious respect to their *relics*; but we do not find any account of their collecting things of this kind in the first or second century. Neither Trypho, Celsus, or any of those who wrote against christianity at first, make this objection to it; but Julian and Eunapius reproached the christians with it very severely. It was, indeed, about the time that the empire became christian that the respect for relics began to make much progress. When Palestine was purged from idols, many persons visited it, and especially the tomb of our Saviour, out of pious curiosity; and *holy earth*, as it was called, from Jerusalem was much valued in the time of Austin.

This respect for relics was much forwarded by the eloquence of preachers, and by no person more than Chrysostom. "I esteem the city of Rome," says he, "not because of the pillars of marble, but because of the pillars of the church therein, the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul. Who can now afford me the favour of being stretched out on the body of St. Paul, of being nailed to his sepulchre, of beholding the dust of that body which bore the marks of the Lord Jesus, and that mouth by which Christ himself spake. I long to see the sepulchre wherein is inclosed that armour of righteousness, that armour of light, those members which still live, and which were dead whilst living. I long to see those chains, those bonds," &c. \*

It appears that about the year 386, the piety of many persons consisted chiefly in carrying and keeping bones and relics, and that many persons who traded in them, abused the credulity of the people. A law

\* In Eph. Hom. viii. Opera, vol. x. p. 1078.



was made by Theodosius to prevent this, but it had little effect. Among other methods by which they gained credit for their relics, it was usual in this age to pretend that revelations were made to persons, to inform them where they should discover the bones of particular martyrs.

The bodies of many of the martyrs having been buried in obscure places, and exposed, when the persecution ceased they were brought to light, and decently interred. Thus began the *translation of relics*, which was afterwards performed with great ceremony and devotion; the possession of them being esteemed the most valuable of treasures, not less than the bones of some of the heroes of antiquity, or particular images of some of their gods, which had likewise been carried from place to place with great solemnity, and probably afforded a pattern for this translation of christian relics. In 359, Constantius caused the bodies of St. Andrew and St. Luke to be taken out of their sepulchres, and carried with great pomp to Constantinople, to the temple of the twelve apostles, which was a church that had been built to their honour by Constantine. This is the first example of the translation of the bodies of saints into churches, and the custom being once begun, was afterwards carried to the greatest excess.\*

But the translation of the relics of the martyr Stephen, in the time of Austin, was one of the most remarkable things of this kind in that age, and the account of it is given by Austin himself. These bones of St. Stephen, after they had lain buried and unknown for near four centuries, were said to have been discovered by Gamaliel, under whom St. Paul had studied, to one Lucianus, a priest; and being found by his direction, they were removed with great solemnity, and, as was pretended, with many miracles into Jerusalem. The fame of these relics was soon spread through the christian world, and many little portions of them were brought away by pilgrims, to enrich the churches of their own countries. And wherever any relics were deposited, an oratory or chapel was always built over

\* Sueton, A. D. 359.



them, and this was called a memorial of that martyr whose relics it contained. Several relics of St. Stephen having been brought by different persons into Africa, as many memorials of him were erected in different places, of which three were particularly famous, and one of them was at Hyppo, where Austin himself was bishop. In all these places, illustrious miracles were said to be wrought continually. For long before this time miracles had been said to be wrought by saints, living and dead.

These abuses did not advance to this height without opposition, though the only person that distinguished himself greatly by his remonstrances on this subject in this age was Vigilantius, a priest of Barcelona. He saw that this superstitious respect for the saints as they were called, their images and their relics, was introducing paganism into the christian church, and he wrote against it with great earnestness. "We see," says he, "a pagan rite introduced into our churches under the pretext of religion, when heaps of wax candles are lighted up in the sun-shine, and people every where kissing and adoring, I know not what contemptible dust, reserved in little vessels, and wrapped up in fine linen. These men do great honour truly to the blessed martyrs, by lighting up paltry candles to those whom the lamb, in the midst of the throne, illuminates with all the lustre of his majesty." Jerom, who answered Vigilantius, did not deny the practice, or that it was borrowed from the pagans, but he defended it. "That," says he, "was only done to idols, and was then to be detested, but this is done to martyrs, and is therefore to be received \*."

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## SECTION I. PART IV.

### *Of Worship paid to Saints and Angels.*

HAVING shewn the general progress of the respect paid by christians to their saints and martyrs, and also

\* Middleton's Letters from Rome, p. 240.



to their images and relics, I shall shew by what steps these saints and martyrs became the objects of their proper *devotion*. But before christians prayed *to* their dead saints, they used to pray *for* them; and the foundation of both these practices was the doctrine of a *soul*, as a substance distinct from the body, and capable of thinking and acting without it, which was borrowed from pagan philosophy.

Most of the fathers were particularly addicted to the doctrine of Plato, who taught that the souls, after quitting their bodies, have influence in the affairs of men, and take care of them. Eusebius approved of the opinion, and endeavoured to confirm it. Theodoret also, in his sermon on the martyrs, tells the pagans, that it was the opinion of Plato, in order to shew that christians have reason to think the same thing of their martyrs \*.

Till the middle of the fourth century it was the general belief that the abode of the souls of the faithful was in subterraneous places, or at least here below, near the earth; but towards the end of this century they were supposed by some to be above, but not in the place where they could enjoy the beatific vision of God. From the former opinion came the custom of praying for the dead, which began so early as the beginning of the third century; the objects of these prayers being their quiet repose in their present situation, and a speedy and happy resurrection. They even prayed for the virgin Mary; and there are also instances of their praying for the damned, in order to lessen their torments.

It was not very soon, a general or fixed opinion, that the souls of the dead were in places where they could hear and attend to what was passing among the living. But thinking more highly of martyrs than of other persons, it was soon imagined that their state after death might be better than that of others. For, while the rest of the dead were supposed to be confined in Hades, which was a subterraneous place, waiting for the resurrection of their bodies, they thought that the martyrs were admitted to the immediate presence

\* Saur, A. D, 407.



of God, and to a state of favour and power with him. Indeed, so early as the middle of the third century, when many went to solicit the prayers of those who were prisoners doomed to death, they would request that, after their death, they would be mindful of the living; and some are even said to have agreed with one another, that which ever of them should die first, he should use his interest in favour of the survivor \*.

So far, however, was it from being usual to pray to saints in the third century, that Origen says, they were not to pray to any *underived being* (αὐθεντῶν γενήτων) not even to Christ himself, but to God the father of all †.

Prayer to the dead began with the martyrs, as well as prayers for the dead, but not till near the end of the fourth century, when it was imagined that they might hear those who invoked them near the place of their interment. But it appears by the Constitutions, and several of the writings of that time, that the public offices were yet preserved pure. In the fifth century they prayed to God to hear the intercessions of the saints and martyrs in their behalf; but there is a great difference between this, and praying to the saints themselves, as if they could hear and help the living; and when the custom of invoking them was introduced, many had doubts on the subject, and therefore to their invocations of them added, “if they were present, and had any influence in things below,” &c.

Austin himself was much perplexed about this; and in one place says, “It is true the saints do not themselves hear what passes below, but they hear of it by others, who die and go to them ‡.” In another place he supposes that the martyrs may assist the living, because they attend where their monuments are. Basil, however, in his homily on the forty martyrs, supposes that they were present in the temples and joined in the prayers of the faithful, but he does not say that the faithful should pray to them §.

One of the first instances of direct invocation of the dead, is that of Theodosius the younger, who cast

\* History of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 26.

John xvii. 2.

† De cura pro Mortuis, cap. xiv. Opera,

vol. iv. p. 890.

§ Opera, vol. i. p. 955.

† Whitby on



ing his eyes upon the coffin of Chrysoftom, asked pardon of him for Arcadius his father, and Eudoxia his mother, because he considered that saint as more particularly present there than elsewhere. But at that time they did not invoke the saints in general, as the apostles, &c. but only those at whose tombs they attended; and there are but few examples of invoking the virgin Mary till far in the fifth century.

Austin is the first who takes notice that praying for the martyrs, which had long been the custom; of christians, did not agree with the invocation of them, which began to gain ground in his time. He says, that it injures the martyrs to pray to God for them, and that when the church mentions them in her prayers, it is not to pray for them, but to be helped by their prayers. Yet, in all the genuine writings of Austin, it does not appear that he ever directly invoked the saints, except by way of apostrophe, as an orator, or in a simple wish that the saint would pray for him. Also praying for the dead in general, and even for the apostles and martyrs, continued, and was not abolished but by the full establishment of the invocation of them. Gregory the first, who contributed most to it, in the beginning of the seventh century, supposed some of the saints to enjoy the beatific vision of God, though most persons still believed that not even the martyrs would be admitted to that vision before the resurrection; and Hugh de Victor, so late as 1130, says that many still doubt whether the saints hear the prayers of those who invoke them, and that it is a question difficult to decide\*.

It appears that Austin was very sensible of the growing superstition of his time, and said, with apparent disapprobation, "I know there are some who  
"adore sepulchres and paintings†." But this does not imply a direct invocation of them. Paulinus of Nola, his cotemporary, went every year to Rome, to shew his respect to the tombs of the martyrs, because, as he said, he had great confidence in their intercession; and about the year 337, Constantine built

\* Sueur, A. D. 407.  
Opera, vol. i. p. 774.

† De moribus ecclesiæ, lib. i. cap. 34.



a magnificent church in honour of the twelve apostles, intending to be buried there; that after his death he might partake of the prayers that would be made there in their honour \*. But neither does this imply a direct invocation of them. In the ancient litanies all the invocations of our Saviour ended with these words, *Lord have mercy upon us* (κυριε ελεησον) repeated many times; but the litanies of the saints consisted of nothing more than an enumeration of their titles, to which, but in later times, they added the words *ora pro nobis*. Examples of the former may be seen in Basil and Chrysostom †.

In the fifth century no opposition was made to the invocation of saints. The common opinion then was, that their souls were not so entirely confined to the celestial mansions, but that they visited mortals, and travelled through various countries; though it was still thought that they more especially frequented the places where their bodies were interred. Also, the images of the saints were by this time honoured with particular worship in several places, and it was imagined by many, that this worship, or the forms of consecration, which were soon introduced, drew into the image the propitious presence of the saint, or celestial being, whom it represented; the very notion which had prevailed with respect to the statues of Jupiter and Mercury, &c.

This excessive veneration for the dead, and for their relics, was greatly promoted by the eloquent preachers or declaimers of those times. Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, and Chrysostom, distinguished themselves in this way. The last of these writers, celebrating the acts of the martyr Babylas, bishop of Antioch, says, “The gentiles will laugh to hear me  
“talk of the acts of persons dead and buried, and consumed to dust; but they are not to imagine that the  
“bodies of martyrs, like those of common men, are  
“destitute of all active force and energy; since a  
“greater power than that of the human soul is super-  
“added to them, the power of the Holy Spirit, which

\* Suetonius, A. D. 337: † Ib. 463.



“ by working miracles in them demonstrates the  
“ truth of the resurrection \*.

To see to what excess this superstitious worship of the dead was carried, in the period of which I am now treating, I shall recite at length, from Dr. Middleton, a passage of Theodorit the ecclesiastical historian, which shews us, as he says, the state of christianity in the fifth century. “ The temples of our martyrs,” “ says this historian, are shining and conspicuous, eminent for their grandeur, and the variety of their ornaments, and displaying far and wide the splendour of their beauty. These we visit, not once, or twice, or five times in the year, but frequently offer up hymns each day to the Lord of them. In health we beg the continuance of it. In sickness the removal of it. The childless beg children; and when these blessings are obtained, we beg the secure enjoyment of them. When we undertake any journey, we beg them to be our companions and guides in it, and when we return safe, we give them our thanks. And that those who pray with faith and sincerity obtain what they ask is manifestly testified by the number of offerings which are made to them in consequence of the benefits received. For some offer the figure of eyes, some of feet, some of hands, made either of gold or silver, which the Lord accepts, though but of little value, measuring the gift by the faculty of the giver. But all these are evident proofs of the cure of as many distempers, being placed there as monuments of the facts, by those who have been made whole. The same monuments likewise proclaim the power of the dead, whose power also demonstrates their God to be the true God †.”

But we shall perhaps form a still clearer idea of the firm possession that these superstitions had obtained in the minds of the generality of christians, when we consider what little respect the manly sense of Vigilantius, who set himself to oppose the progress of these corrupt practices, procured him from Jerom the most learned writer of his age. Unhappily we have nothing from Vigilantius, but what his opponent himself has

\* Middleton's Inquiry, p. 152. † Introductory Discourse, p. 69.



given us from him, in his answer. But even this is abundantly sufficient to satisfy us with respect to the good sense of the one, and the bigoted violence of the other, together with the character of the age in which they lived.

Vigilantius maintained, as the articles are enumerated by Middleton, that the honour paid to the rotten bones and dust of martyrs, keeping them in the churches, and lighting up wax candles before them, after the manner of the heathens, were the ensigns of idolatry; that the celibacy of the clergy, and their vows of chastity were the seminary of lewdness; that to pray for the dead, or to desire the prayers of the dead, was superstitious: and that the souls of the departed saints and martyrs were at rest in some particular place, whence they could not remove themselves at pleasure, so as to be present every where to the prayers of their votaries; that the sepulchres of their martyrs ought not to be worshipped, nor their fasts or vigils to be observed; and lastly that the signs and wonders said to be wrought by their relics, and at their sepulchres, served to no good end or purpose of religion.

These were the *sacrilegious tenets*, as Jerom calls them, which he could not bear with patience, or without the utmost grief, and for which he declared Vigilantius to be a most detestable heretic, venting his foul mouthed blasphemies against the relics of the martyrs, which were daily working signs and wonders. He bids him go into the churches of those martyrs, and he would be cleansed from the evil spirit which possessed him, and feel himself burnt, not by those wax candles, which so much offended him, but by invisible flames, which would force that dæmon who talked within him, to confess himself to be the same who had personated a Mercury, perhaps a Bacchus, or some other of their gods among the heathens. At this wild rate, says Dr. Middleton, this Father raves on, through several pages, in a strain much more furious than the most bigoted papist would use at this day in defence of the same rites\*. All the modern ecclesiastical

\* Introductory Discourse, p. 131, &c.



Historians give the same account of this Vigilantius\*.

I must not conclude the history of this period without observing that some undue respect was paid to *angels*, who were believed to transact much of the business of this world, by commission from God. This arose from the opinions of the Gnostics, and is alluded to by the apostle Paul, who says that some through a *voluntary humility*, worshipped angels, *being vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds*. Coll. ii. 18.

It seems probable that some undue respect was paid to angels, as well as to Christ and the Holy Spirit, in the time of Justin Martyr, for he says †, “him (God) “and the Son that came from him, and the host of other “good angels, who accompany and resemble him, together with the prophetic spirit, we adore and worship, in word and truth honouring them.” With this writer, however, and the christians of his time, it is not probable that this respect for angels amounted to praying to them. For we find that praying to angels, which had been practised in Phrygia, and Pisidia, was forbidden as idolatrous, by the council of Laodicea in 364.

## SECTION I. PART V.

### *Of the Respect paid to the Virgin Mary in this Period.*

As our Saviour became the object of worship before any other man, so his mother soon began to be considered with a singular respect, and at length she engrossed so much of the devotion of the christian world, that I shall make a separate article of it, in each period of this part of my work.

It is remarkable that, excepting what was said to Mary by the angel, *henceforth all generations shall call thee blessed*, no particular compliment is paid to her in all the history of the evangelists. She is only mentioned

\* See Mosheim, vol. 1. p. 393. † Edit. Thirlby, p. 43. 183.



as a pious woman, among several others, and was committed to the care of John by our Lord, as he hung upon the cross. Nay, several expressions of our Lord, though not really disrespectful, yet shew that, in his character of a teacher sent from God, he considered her only as any other person or disciple.

When she applied to him, about the failure of wine at the marriage-feast in Cana, he replied, *Woman what hast thou to do with me?* and gave her no satisfaction with respect to what he intended to do. And again, when she and some others of his relations were endeavouring to make their way through a croud, in order to speak to him, and he was told of it, he replied, *Who is my mother and who are my brethren?* *He that does the will of God the same is my brother and sister and mother.* In the book of Acts her name is but once mentioned, as one of those who was assembled with the apostles after the ascension of Jesus. Acts i. 14. so that where, or how she lived, or died, we have no knowledge at all. On how narrow a foundation does the excessive veneration that was afterwards paid to the *blest virgin*, as she is now called, rest?

The first mention that we find of any particular respect paid to the virgin Mary, was in the time of Epiphanius, when some women used to offer to her cakes called *collyrides*, from which they got the name of Collyridians; and as men had no concern in it, except by permitting their wives to do it, it is called by this writer a *heresy of the women*. He himself greatly disapproved of it, and wrote against it. This may be thought extraordinary, since oblations at the tombs of the dead were very common in this age. But as it was not known, where the virgin Mary was interred, the offering of cakes to *her* was a new step in the worship of the dead, and was therefore more particularly noticed. It is plain, however, from his account of this affair, that prayers were then offered to the virgin Mary, and by some of the orthodox, as they were called, though he himself rejected the thought of it with indignation.

In a piece of Athanasius, intitled *De Sanctissima Deipara*, we find a long address to the virgin, but it seems



to have been a piece of oratory, and we can hardly infer from it that it was his custom to address his devotions to her. In it he says, "Hear O daughter of David, and of Abraham; incline thine ear to our prayers, and forget not thy people;" and again, "Intercede for us lady, mistress, queen, and mother of God \*."

The first who was particularly noticed, as introducing this worship of the virgin, is Peter Gnapheus, bishop of Antioch, in the fifth century, who appointed her name to be called upon in the prayers of the church. This devotion, however, seems to have taken its rise towards the end of the fourth century, and in Arabia, where we read of a controversy respecting her; some maintaining that after she was delivered of Jesus, she lived with her husband Joseph as his wife. This was violently opposed by others, who running into the other extreme, worshipped her as a goddess, thinking it necessary to appease her anger, and seek her favour, by libations, sacrifices, the oblation of cakes, and such services, as Epiphanius censured.†

To persons much acquainted with ecclesiastical history, nothing of this kind will appear extraordinary. Otherwise we might be surprised how it should ever have been considered as a thing of any consequence, whether the mother of Christ had any commerce with her husband or not. The presumption is, that, as they lived together, at least after the birth of Jesus, she had. However, the respect paid to *virginity* in that age was so great, that it was thought to derogate from her virtue and honour, to suppose that she ever had any commerce with man; and therefore, without any proper evidence in the case, it was *presumed* that she must have continued a virgin; and to maintain the contrary was even deemed heretical. In the council of Capua, in 389, Bonosus a bishop in Macedonia, was condemned for maintaining that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not always a virgin, following it is said, the heresy of Paulinus.

When the doctrine of *original sin* was started, the veneration for the virgin Mary was so great, that

\* Opera, vol. i. p. 1041.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 331.



doubts were entertained whether she might not have been exempt from it, as well as her son. Austin maintained that no person ever lived without sin except the virgin Mary, concerning whom, he, however, only says he will not hold any controversy, for the honour, that we owe to our Saviour\*.

After the deification and worship of Christ, it was natural that the rank of his mother should rise in some proportion to it. Accordingly we find that, after Christ was considered as God, it became customary to give Mary the title of *mother of God* (*Theotokos*). This, however, was not done, at least generally, till after the council of Chalcedon in 451. This title of mother of God, happened to be a favourite term with Apollinaris and his followers, and in consequence of this, perhaps, it was, that Nestorius violently opposed this innovation, thinking it sufficient that Mary should be called *the mother of Christ*.

This opposition, however, operated as in many other cases, viz. to increase the evil, and in the third council of Ephesus, in which Nestorius was condemned, it was decreed that Mary should be called the mother of God. From this time she was honoured more than ever; but still she had not the titles that were given her afterwards of *queen of heaven, mistress of the world, goddess, mediatrix, gate of paradise, &c.*

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## SECTION II. PART I.

*Of the Worship of Saints in the middle Ages, and till the Reformation.*

TILL the beginning of the fifth century prayers to saints were only occasional, as at the place of their interment, or on the anniversary of their death, &c. because at that time it was generally supposed that their souls were hovering about that place, and there,

\* De Natura et Gratia, cap. xxxvi. Opera, vol. vii. p. 747.



also, was the scene of all the miracles that were originally ascribed to them. But when it came to be a general persuasion, that the souls of the martyrs, and other persons of eminent sanctity, were admitted to the immediate presence of God, and were capable of a general inspection of the affairs of the world, prayers to them were no longer confined to the place of their interment, or to the chapels and churches erected over them.

It was now imagined that the souls of these illustrious dead could hear the prayers that were addressed to them in all places, and at all times. For, as for the great difficulty of a human being (whose faculties are of course limited) being capable of knowing what passes in more than one place at a time, they seem not to have considered it. Or they might suppose the power of an unembodied spirit, not now confined to any particular corporeal system, to be incapable of any limitation. Or they might suppose that God had endued them with faculties of which they were not naturally capable before. Certain, however it is, that in the middle ages, the common people addressed their prayers to dead men with as little apprehension of their not being heard by them, as if they had been praying to the Divine Being himself.

In fact, the christian saints succeeded, in all respects, to the honours which had been paid to the pagan deities; almost all of whom had been supposed to have been men, whose extraordinary merit had exalted them to the rank and power of gods after their death. This analogy between the two religions made the transition very easy to the bulk of the common people; and the leading men among the christians perceiving this, and being themselves not averse to the ceremonies and pomp of the ancient idolatry, contrived to make the transition still easier, by preserving every thing that they possibly could in the ancient forms of worship, changing only the objects of them.

About the eleventh century this was done without disguise, and though *images* were not common, and we read of no *statues* in christian churches at that time; yet, in other respects, the worship of the saints



was modelled according to the religious services which had been paid to the heathen gods. Some time afterwards we find that christians had the same temples, the same altars, and often the same images with the pagans, only giving them new names. Dr. Middleton was shewn an antique statue of a young Bacchus, which was worshipped in the character of a female saint\*.

The noblest heathen temple now remaining in the world is the Pantheon, or Rotunda at Rome, which, as the description over the portico informs us, *having been impiously dedicated of old by Agrippa to Jupiter, and all the gods, was piously reconsecrated by pope Boniface the fourth to the blessed virgin and all the saints*. With this single alteration, says Dr. Middleton†, it serves as exactly for all the purposes of the popish, as it did for the pagan worship, for which it was built. For as in the old temple every one might find the god of his country, and address himself to that deity to whose religion he was most devoted, so it is the same thing now. Every one chooses the patron whom he likes best; and one may see here different services going on at the same time at different altars, with distinct congregations around them, just as the inclinations of the people lead them to the worship of this or that particular saint.

As men are greatly influenced by *names*, it was even contrived that the name of the new divinity should as much as possible resemble the old one. Thus the saint *Apollinaris* was made to succeed the god *Apollo*, and *St. Martina* the god *Mars*. It was farther contrived that, in some cases, the same *business* should continue to be done in the same place, by substituting for the heathen god a christian saint of a similar character, and distinguished for the same virtues. Thus, there being a temple at Rome, in which sickly infants had been usually presented for the cure of their disorders, they found a christian saint who had been famous for the same attention to children; and consecrating the same temple to him, the very same practices are now continued as in the times of heathenism‡.

\* Letters from Rome, p. 160. † Ib. p. 161.

‡ Middleton's Letters, p. 167



Farther, as it had been customary to hang up in the heathen temples, particularly those of Esculapius, pictures of scenes in which persons had supposed they had been relieved by the interposition of their gods, and especially of limbs that had been diseased, and were afterwards cured, &c. the same custom, as I have hinted already, was very early introduced into the christian churches; and in later ages, I doubt not, these exhibitions were more numerous than they had ever been in the times of heathenism.

Dr. Middleton, who observed the present popish worship with this view, mentions other points of resemblance, so numerous, and so little varied, that he says, he could have imagined himself present in the ancient heathen temples; and he is confident that a considerable knowledge of the ancient heathen ritual might be learned from them. Candles are continually burning in the present churches as in the former temples, incense is always smoaking, many of the images are daubed with red ochre, as those of the heathen gods often were, their faces are black with the smoke of candles and incense, people are continually on their knees, or prostrate before them; and, according to the accounts of all travellers, the prayers that are addressed to them are of the same nature, and urged with the same indecent importunity. They are also followed by the same marks of resentment, if their requests be not granted, as if they hoped to get by foul means, what they could not obtain by fair. Mr. Byron informs us \*, that being in danger of shipwreck, a Jesuit who was on board brought out an image of some saint, which he desired might be hung up in the mizen shrouds; and this being done, he kept threatening it, that if they had not a breeze of wind soon he would throw it into the sea. A breeze springing up, he carried back the image with an air of great triumph.

As the heathens had gods of particular countries, so the christians of these ages imagined that one saint gave particular attention to the affairs of one country, and another saint to those of another. Thus St. George

\* Voyage p. 207.



was considered as the patron of England, St. Dennis of France, St. Januarius of Naples, &c.

In all countries different saints were supposed to attend to different things, each having his proper province. Thus St. George is invoked in battle, St. Margaret in child-bearing, St. Genevieve for rain, and St. Nicholas, or St. Anthony, by seamen, &c.

Also, as with the heathens, the same god was thought to be worshipped to more advantage in one place than another; this was imagined to be the case with respect to the new divinities. For, as there was a Jupiter Ammon, a Jupiter Olympius, and a Jupiter Capitolinus, so the papists have one virgin Mary of Loretto, another of Montferrat, &c. And though there be a church dedicated to the virgin in a town where a person lives, yet he will often think it worth his while to make a pilgrimage of some hundreds of miles, to worship the same virgin in some other place, which she is supposed to honour with more particular attention, and to have distinguished by more miracles, &c.

So many persons had acquired the reputation of *Saints* in the ninth century, that the ecclesiastical councils found it necessary to decree, that no person should be considered as a saint, till a bishop in the province had pronounced him worthy of that honour; and the consent of the pope was likewise generally thought expedient, if not necessary. No saint, however, was created by the authority of any pope before Walric, bishop of Augsburgh, received that honour from John the 15th, in the tenth century; though others say it was Savibert who was first canonized by Leo the third, after his life and pretensions had been regularly examined \*. At length Alexander the third, in the twelfth century, asserted the sole right of canonization to the pope.

This business of *canonization* was also copied from paganism, the senate of Rome having taken upon it to pronounce what persons should be *deified*, and having decreed that honour to several of their emperors, to

\* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 158. Basnage, *Histoire des Eglises Reformées*, vol. iii. p. 691.



whom temples were consequently erected, and worship regularly paid. Also the title of *Divus*, which had been given by the decree of the senate to deified men, was now adopted by the christians, and given to their canonized saints. The consequence of a regular canonization was, that the name of the saint was inserted in the calendar in red letters; he might then be publicly invoked and prayed to, churches and altars might be dedicated to him, masses might be said in his honour, holidays might be kept in his name, his image also might be set up and prayed to, and his relics might be reverently laid up, and worshipped.

Considering who they were that directed this business of canonization, and what kind of merit weighed most with them, it is no wonder that many of these canonized persons were such as had little title to the appellation of saints. They were generally miserable enthusiasts, some of them martyrs to their own austerities, and sometimes men who had distinguished themselves by nothing but their zeal for what was imagined to be the *rights of the church*, and their opposition to the temporal princes of the times; such as Thomas a Becket of this country.

As many of the persons to whom divine honours are paid in catholic countries, began to be distinguished in this manner before there were any regular canonizations, and in times of great ignorance, we are not surprised, though we cannot help being amused, at the gross mistakes that were sometimes made in this serious business; several of the names, the most distinguished by the honours that are paid to them, being those of persons altogether *imaginary*, so that the object of their worship never had any existence. Such is St. *Ursula*, and the eleven thousand virgins. This woman is said to have been a native of Cornwall, who, with her virgins, travelled to Rome, and in their return through Germany, accompanied by pope Cyriacus, suffered martyrdom at Cologne. Baronius himself says there never was any pope of that name.

In this class also we must put the *seven sleepers*, who are said to have slept in a cave from the time of Decius, to that of Theodosius, or as they reckon it 162



years; and who, to the confutation of some who denied the resurrection, awakened after that interval, and looked as fresh as ever. No better claim has *St. George*, the patron of this country, or *St. Christopher*, who is said to have been twelve feet or twelve cubits high, and to have carried our Saviour over an arm of the sea upon his back. From the words *Vera Icon*, or the *true image*, meaning that of our Saviour, impressed upon a handkerchief, they have made faint *Veronica*, and supposed this handkerchief to have been given to her by our Saviour himself.

Several mistakes have been made by supposing that words beginning with an S, were intended to express the name of some saint, and from the remainder of the word they have accordingly composed the name of an imaginary person. Thus, in all probability, from *Soracte*, the name of a mountain, they have got the name of *St. Oreste*, softening the sound after the Italian manner; and what is more extraordinary, from a fragment of an inscription, which, in all probability was originally *præfectus viarum*, the S only remaining of the word *præfectus*, and *viar* of the word following they have made *St. Viar*; and the Spaniards, in whose country this inscription was found, fancying that this new saint had distinguished himself by many illustrious miracles, solicited pope Urban to do something to his honour \*. In England particular honour was paid to *St. Amphibolus*, which appears to have been nothing but a *cloke* that had belonged to *St. Alban* †.

Besides particular festivals for particular saints, the papists have a festival for the commemoration of *all saints* in general, lest, as we may suppose, any should have been omitted in their calendar. This was introduced by Gregory the fourth.

These new objects of worship presently engrossed almost all the devotion of the vulgar, who think they may make more free with these inferior divinities than they can with the Supreme Being; so that the name of the true God, the Father, is seldom made use of by

\* Middleton's Letters from Rome, p. 173. † Ib. p. 174.



them \*. And those persons who have attached themselves to any particular saint have become most passionately fond of them, and have been led to magnify their power to a degree which excites both our pity and indignation †. There is a book entitled *the Conformity of St. Francis*, intended to shew how nearly he approached to Christ, in his birth, miracles, and all the particulars of his life. But nothing was ever so extraordinary as the accounts of Ignatius, by his followers the Jesuits; and it is the more so, as he lived in modern times.

Some of the Jesuits have said, it was no wonder that Moses worked so many miracles, since he had the name of God written upon his rod; or that the apostles worked miracles, since they spake in the name of Christ: whereas St. Ignatius had performed as many miracles as the apostles, and more than Moses, in his own name. Others of them have said that only Christ, the apostle Peter, the blessed Virgin, and God, could even contemplate the sanctity of St. Ignatius. They also applied to him this passage of scripture, *God has in these last times spoken unto us by his Son* \*.

Though the state of the Catholic church has been improved in several respects by means of the reformation, in consequence of which several abuses were so fully exposed, that little has since been said in defence of them; yet, it was a long time before any thing was done by authority to remedy this shocking abuse. The council of Trent connived at all these things. They did nothing to check the invocation of

\* Mr. Brydone says (Travels, vol. ii. p. 127) he remarked with how little respect the people of Sicily passed the chapels that were dedicated to God. They hardly deigned to give a little inclination of the head; but when they came near those of their favourite Saints, they bowed down to the very ground.

† Mr. Swinburne says (Travels, p. 174) that from what he saw, he is apt to suspect, that the people in Spain trouble themselves with few serious thoughts on the subject of religion; and that, provided they can bring themselves to believe that their favourite Saint looks upon them with an eye of attention, they take it for granted, that under his influence, they are freed from all apprehension of damnation in a future state, and indeed, he adds, from any great concern about the moral duties of this life.

‡ Basnage Histoire des Eglises Reformées vol. iii. p. 698.



faints, and indeed by their decrees, the applying to them directly for help and assistance is encouraged. But not long ago a very considerable reformation of the calendar, in this respect, was made by pope Benedict XIV.

Together with the worship of faints, that of *angels* also gained much ground in this period. Pope Gregory the fourth, appointed a festival in honour of St. Michael, which, indeed, had long been observed both in the East, and in Italy, and was then almost universal in the Latin church. So proper objects of worship are angels considered to be by the papists, that they pray to them directly, for the pardon of sin, and eternal life \*. Of all the faints, it is only the virgin Mary that is addressed in such a high style of devotion as this.

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## SECTION II. PART II.

### *Of the Worship of the Virgin Mary.*

WITH such an astonishing increase of the veneration of faints and martyrs, (christians having first prayed for them, then hoped, and prayed for their intercession with God, till at last they made direct addresses to them) it will naturally be expected that their devotion to the virgin Mary would advance no less rapidly. Accordingly we find such particular attention paid to her, that both the Son, and the Father, are with many persons almost entirely overlooked. In words, indeed, they pretend that the devotion addressed to her falls short of that which is paid to God, as it exceeds that which is paid to other faints, calling the devotion that is paid to God by the name of *Latria*, that to the faints *Dulia*, and that to the blessed virgin *Hyperdulia*; but these distinctions are only nominal, and, in fact, if there be any difference, it seems to be rather in favour of the virgin, as appears by their using ten *Aves*, or

\* Basnage, vol. i. p. 308.



salutations of the virgin, for one *Pater*, or the Lord's prayer, and by that humble prostration with which they continually pay their devotion to her.

The prayers that are constantly addressed to her, are such as these, "Mary, the mother of grace, the mother of mercy, do thou defend us from our enemies and receive us in the hour of death: *Solve vincula reis*, pardon the guilty: *Profer Lumen cæcis*, give light to the blind." Also "*Jure matris redemptori impera*, that is, by the right of a mother command our redeemer," is an allowed mode of address to her \*. The psalms which contain an address to God are applied to the virgin Mary by Cardinal Bonaventure in his *Psalter of the blessed virgin*; and one of their greatest doctors declared, that all things that are God's are the virgin Mary's; because she is both the spouse and the mother of God †.

Let us now see by what steps, this progress was made; for, strong as was the propensity to this kind of idolatry, times, and proper circumstances, were requisite to bring it to this height. It is said that Peter Fullo, a monk of Constantinople, introduced the name of the virgin Mary into the public prayers about the year 480; but it is certain she was not generally invoked in public till a long time after that ‡. Justinian, in giving thanks for his victories, and praying, only says, "we ask this also by the prayers of the holy and glorified Mary, mother of God, and always a virgin;" it being the custom at that time to make use of the intercession of the virgin, but not to invoke her directly.

When it was thought proper to keep up the festivals and ceremonies of the pagan religion, and only to change the objects of them, the virgin Mary was sure to come in for her share of these new honours, together with other saints. Accordingly we find that, whereas the pagans had used, in the beginning of February to celebrate the feast of Proserpine with burning tapers; to divert them from this impiety, christians instituted on the same day, the feast of *Purifica-*

\* Burnet on the Articles, p. 308.

† History of Popery, vol. i. p. 164. ‡ Sueur. A. D. 483.



tion, in honour of the virgin Mary, and called it *Candlemas*, from the lights that were used on the occasion. This institution is ascribed to pope *Vigilius*, about the year 536, though others fix it to the year 543. But before this time there had been a feast on that day called (*υπαπανη*) or the *meeting*, in commemoration of Simeon meeting Mary on the day of her purification, and taking Jesus in his arms, when he was presented in the temple. But there was not then any invoking of the virgin, no crying *Ave maris stella*, nor lighting wax candles in her honour\*. The feast of the *immaculate conception* was also added about the same time †.

Though we know few particulars of the *life* of the virgin Mary, and nothing at all concerning her *death*; yet, it was so much taken for granted, that she went immediately into heaven (though other saints were obliged to wait for the beatific vision till the resurrection) that about the ninth century a festival was instituted in commemoration of her *assumption*.

The worship of the virgin Mary also received new accessions of solemnity and superstition in the tenth century. Towards the conclusion of it, the custom of celebrating masses and abstaining from flesh-meat in her honour on Saturdays was introduced; and after this, what was called *the lesser office* of the virgin was confirmed by Urban in the following century. In this tenth century also, the *rosary* and *crown* of the blessed virgin were first used. The former consists of fifteen repetitions of the Lord's prayer, and one hundred and fifty salutations of the blessed virgin; and the latter, according to the different opinions of learned men concerning the age of the virgin, consist of six or seven repetitions of the Lord's prayer, and accordingly of six or seven times ten salutations of the virgin ‡. Peter Damiani speaks of the *lesser office* of the virgin as a new form of devotion, instituted in his time, as also of Saturday being consecrated to her honour; as Monday was to that of the angels §.

We have seen that some persons, in the former period, entertained a suspicion that the virgin Mary

\* Saur, A. D. 543.

† Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 225.

‡ Mosheim, vol. i. p. 466.

§ Fleury, A. D. 1260.



might perhaps be born without original sin. In the progress of things, which I have been describing, these suspicions were not likely to lose ground. However, it was far from being the universal opinion, that she was born in any more favourable circumstances than other persons. The first controversy on this subject was about the year 1136, when the canons of Lyons started the opinion of the *immaculate conception*, as it now began to be called, and would have established an office for celebrating it, but Bernard opposed it. The Thomists, or the followers of Thomas Aquinas opposed that opinion till the year 1300, when Scotus a Dominican or Cordelier, first made it a *probable opinion*, and his followers afterwards made it an *article of faith*, whilst the Franciscans or Jacobines held a contrary opinion; and the controversy between them continued three hundred years, and indeed has not regularly been decided to this day.

The university of Paris declared for the immaculate conception, and there were several popes on both sides of the question. John XXII. favoured the Jacobines on account of the hatred he bore to the Cordeliers, who took the part of the emperor Lewis of Bavaria, whom he had excommunicated. Sixtus the fourth, who was a Cordelier favoured the opinion which had always been maintained by his order; and in the year 1474, he published a bull, in which he prohibited any censure of the opinion of the immaculate conception as heretical, and confirmed the new service that had been made for the festival of that conception.

This controversy continued till the council of Trent, which confirmed the constitution of Sixtus the fourth, but without condemning the opinions of the Jacobines \*. This did not lessen the controversy; the Dominicans still maintaining the immaculate conception, and the Franciscans, opposing it. Spain was perfectly in a flame about it, of which the very sign-posts of this day bear witness. For travellers say, that, in going from Barcelona to Granada, to the name of the virgin Mary, is always added *Sin, peccado concebida*,

\* History of the council of Trent, p. 103.



*conceived without sin* \*. At length Alexander the 5th, unable to settle the controversy in any other manner, in 1667, ordered that there should be no more preaching on the subject †.

The devotion paid to the virgin is very little, if at all, lessened since the reformation. At Einsfilden, or *Notre Dame des Eremites*, in Switzerland, says Mr. Coxe ‡, crowds of pilgrims from all quarters resort to adore the virgin, and to present their offerings; and it is computed that upon a moderate calculation, their number amounts yearly to a hundred thousand.

The last circumstance that I shall relate concerning the virgin Mary, is, that in 1566, some Flemings began to wear medals in their hats in her honour, representing what was supposed to be a miraculous image of her at Hale in Hainault, and which they wore, to distinguish them from the protestants of that country. The pope blessed and consecrated these medals, granting a remission of the punishment of sin to those that wore them. And this gave a beginning to the consecration of medals §.

## SECTION II. PART III.

### *Of the Worship of Images in this Period.*

WE have seen how, in the preceding period, a fondness for pictures and images had made some progress among christians, in consequence of an undue veneration for the *persons* whom they represented. In the

\* Mr. Swinburne says (Travels p. 190) I believe there is scarcely a house in Granada that has not over its door in large red characters, *Ave Maria purissima sin peccado concebida*. A military order in that country swear to defend by word and deed the doctrine of the immaculate conception. The peasants near Alicant, instead of saluting strangers in any other way, bawl out, *Ave Maria purissima*, to which they expect to be answered *sin peccado concebida*, or *deo gratias*. † Histoire des Papes, vol. v. p. 342. ‡ Travels, p. 57. § Histoire des Papes, vol. v. p. 10.



natural progress of things, images were treated with more and more respect, till it was imagined that the homage paid to the saint/required the same to be paid to his image. It was even imagined, that he was so far present to the image, as to communicate to it the powers of which he himself was possessed; the image being a kind of *body* to the soul of the saint.

This was the very state of things among the heathens. For they imagined that, after the forms of consecration, the invisible power of the god, to whom any image was dedicated, was brought to reside in it, and to entitle it to the same respect as if it had been the god himself in person. At length, therefore, christians came to be idolaters in the same gross sense, in which the heathens had ever been so; being equally worshippers both of dead men and of their images. But no great progress had been made in this business at the close of the last period.

At that time pictures and images in churches were chiefly used for the purpose of ornament, for the commemoration of the saints to which they were dedicated, and the instruction of the ignorant. Gregory the great, encouraged the use of them, so that the honour paid to them was much increased towards the end of the sixth century, and more in the following. And when Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, seeing the bad consequence of introducing these images, not only ordered that no person should fall down before them, or pay them any homage, but that they should be removed from the churches of his diocese; Gregory disapproved of his conduct, praising his zeal; but blaming him for breaking the images. He, therefore, only desired that they might not be worshipped, but would have them preserved in the churches, on the principle, that those who could not read might be instructed by them\*. But in little more than a century, the see of Rome changed its doctrine on the subject, Gregory the second being strenuous for the worship of images.

The first who openly espoused the doctrine of images in the West was pope Constantine, the predecessor of Gregory the second; and there seems to have been as

\* Sueur, A. D. 599.



much of *policy*, as of *religion*, in the measures which he took with respect to it. The emperor Philippicus had taken an active part in opposition to images, and had ordered them to be removed from churches, in order to put a stop to the idolatrous veneration that was beginning to be paid to them. This, the pope, who wished for an occasion of quarrelling with the emperor, in order to make himself independent of him, resented so highly, that, in a synod, held on the occasion, he not only condemned his conduct in that respect, but excommunicated him, as a heretic, and pronounced him unworthy of the empire, authorising and exhorting his subjects to revolt from him. This new heresy was called that of the *Iconoclasts*, or the *breakers of images*. By picking this quarrel with the emperor, this pope and his successors asserted not only their independence of the emperors of Constantinople, but their superiority to them.

Gregory the second, who succeeded Constantine, and the emperor Leo Isauricus, were at continual variance on this subject of images; the latter pulling them down from the churches, and the former excommunicating him for it, and also pronouncing his subjects absolved of their allegiance to him, and forbidding them to pay him tribute.

Something farther was done in favour of images by Stephen the third, or rather the fourth, in opposition of Constantine the second, whom he had deposed, and who had called a synod in which the worship of images had been condemned. This Stephen called another synod, in which, another innovation in christian worship was made, or at least authorized, viz. the worshipping of God himself by an image. For they condemn the execrable and pernicious decree of the former synod, by which the condition of the immortal God was made worse than that of men. "It is lawful," say they, "to set up statues of mortal men, both that we may not be ungrateful, and that we may be excited to imitate their virtuous actions; and shall it not then be lawful to set up the image of God, whom we ought always, if it were possible, to have before our eyes \*?"

\* Platina de vita Stephani III.



On this poor pretence was the authority of the second commandment, which expressly forbids the worshipping of the true God by images, entirely set aside. This is so palpable a contradiction of the doctrine of the scriptures, that the second commandment is entirely left out in several of the copies of the ten commandments among the papists, and one of the others is split into two, for the sake of preserving the number *ten*, and to hide this falsification from the common people.

The incensing of statues, which had been a constant heathen practice, is said to have been introduced into the christian worship of images by Leo the third.

The worship of images had many fluctuations in the East, some of the emperors favouring it and others discouraging it; but at length the proper adoration of them was fully established in the second council of Nice, held in the year 787, under the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenita, or rather his mother Irene, a most ambitious and violent woman. This, which was denominated *the second Nicene council*, decreed that images should be made according to the form of the venerable cross; meaning what we call *crucifixes*, or images of our Saviour upon the cross; that they might be made of any materials, that they should be dedicated, and put into churches, as well as upon walls, in private houses, and upon the public roads. It was appointed in this council, that, in the first place, images should be made of our Saviour, in the next place of the virgin Mary (called by them the *immaculate mother of God*) then of the venerable angels, and lastly of all saints, that the honour of adoration may be rendered to them; not, however, that of *Latria*, which they say belongs only to the Divine Nature, but, “as we approach with reverence the type of the venerable and vivifying cross, and the holy evangelists, with oblations, perfumes, and lights. For the honour that is done to the image is reflected upon the prototype, and he who adores the image adores the subject of it.” They add, as usual, “Let all who think otherwise be excommunicated.” It is to be observed that no *statues*, or even bas-reliefs, were permitted by this council. These were not yet admitted into



churches, as they were afterwards \*. So passionately fond were the Greeks of this species of worship, that they esteemed this second council of Nice as the most signal blessing derived to them from the interposition of heaven; and in commemoration of it instituted an anniversary festival, called *the feast of orthodoxy* †.

The Fathers of this council expressed a detestation of images representing the *Deity*, though they had the sanction of pope Stephen's synod in the Latin Church; and though this practice was not soon general, even in the West, at length pictures and images, even of God the Father and of the Trinity became common. The council of Trent favours them, provided they be *decently made*; directions are given concerning the use of images of the Trinity in the public offices; and such as held it unlawful to have such images were expressly condemned at Rome in 1690 ‡.

In the West, notwithstanding the favour shewn to images by the popes, the worship of them did not go down so well as it did in the East, owing to the opposition that was made to it by Charlemagne. He called a council at Frankfort in 794, in which the second council of Nice was condemned. Images, however, were allowed to be kept in churches, for the purpose of ornament and instruction, but *worship* was forbidden to be paid to them. The same disposition, so hostile to image worship, continued to influence the successors of Charlemagne. For we find that, in a synod held at Paris, by order of Lothaire, in 825, on the subject of images, it was ordered as before, to keep them, but not to worship them. Another council was held at Paris by Louis the meek, in 844, in which the same decrees were repeated.

But the greatest opposition to the worship of images in this age, was made by Claudius, bishop of Turin, a man of distinguished abilities and zeal, and from whom the Waldenses, who continued to oppose this, and almost every other corruption of the church of Rome, seem to have had their origin. This eminent bishop not only wrote with great earnestness and force upon

\* Sacur, A. D. 787. † Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 152.

‡ Burnet on the Articles, p. 293.



the subject ; but perceiving how violently the common people went into the worship of images, and that he could not by any other means check the progress of it, he ordered all the images and crosses in his diocese to be demolished. For this conduct he was generally blamed, even in France, and Germany, but not for opposing the worship which was then paid to images \*. About the same time, Agobard bishop of Lyons, wrote excellently against the worship of images, and also against dedicating churches to any but God †.

The worship of images, did not continue without some interruption, after the second council of Nice, even in the East. But as one woman, Irene, had procured their worship to be ordered at that time ; so another woman, Theodora, governing her son Michael the third, procured their final establishment in 842. But the Greeks never had any images besides those on plain surfaces, or pictures ; they never approved of statues. Notwithstanding the opposition to the worship of images by the emperors of the West, yet at length, through the influence of the Roman pontiffs, even the Gallican clergy began to pay certain kinds of religious homage to images, towards the end of the ninth century, and in this they were followed by the Germans and other nations ‡.

It has been asserted, that properly speaking, worship never was paid to images by christians, but that when they bowed before them, they only addressed themselves to the saints whom they represent. But that their regards *do* terminate in the image itself, as much as they do in any living man, whom they should address, is evident, not only from a variety of considerations, suggested by the history of image worship, but from the acknowledgment of those who practice it ; which puts it beyond all doubt, that they suppose a real power to reside in the image itself, just as they suppose the spirit of a man to be in a man.

In the eleventh century it was debated in the Greek church, whether there was an *inherent sanctity* in the images of the saints ; and though it was determined in

\* Sacer, A. D. 827. † Ibid. ‡ Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 151.



a council, that the images of Christ and of the saints did not partake "of the nature of the divine Saviour, " or of the saints ;" yet it was maintained "that they " were enriched with a certain communication of divine grace\*."

The Latin church has by no means been behind that of the Greeks in this respect. For, if we judge by the practice of the church of Rome, and even by some of their acknowledgments, it will be evident that a proper *Latria*, or such worship as they themselves think is due to God, is also to be given to images. Those who write in favour of it frequently cite this hymn, *cruce ave, spes unica, auge piis justitiam, reisque dona veniam*; that is, " hail cross, our only hope, increase righteousness in the godly, and pardon the guilty." It is expressly said in the Pontifical that *Latria* is due to the cross. This favours the opinions of those who say that *Latria* is to be given to all those images, to the originals of which it is due, as to Christ, as the *Dulia* is to be given to the images of the saints, and the *Hyper-dulia* to those of the virgin Mary †. The council of Trent only decreed that *due worship* should be given to images, but did not define what that due worship is.

Among acts of worship, they reckon the oblation of incense, and lights ; and the reason given by them for all this, is, because the honour of the image, or type, passes to the original, or prototype ; so that direct worship was to terminate in the image itself. And Durandus passed for little less than a heretic, because he thought that images were worshipped only improperly ; because at their presence we call to mind the object represented by them, which we worship by means of the image, as if the object itself was before us.

Thomas Aquinas, and many others after him, expressly teach that the same acts and degrees of worship which are due to the original, are also due to the image. They think that an image has such a relation to the original, that both ought to be worshipped by

\* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 329. † Burnet on the Articles, p. 295.



the same act ; nay that to worship the image with any other kind of act, is to worship it on its own account, which they think is idolatry. On the other hand, those who adhere to the Nicene Doctrine say that the image is to be worshipped with an inferior degree of homage ; and that otherwise idolatry must follow : so that which ever of the two schemes be adopted, idolatry must be the consequence, with some or other of the advocates for this worship \*.

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## SECTION II. PART IV.

### *Of the Respect paid to Relics in this Period.*

IF so much respect was paid to the *images* of saints, we shall not wonder that even more account was made of their *relics*, which bear a still nearer relation to them ; and if an invisible virtue, viz. all the power of the saint, could be supposed to accompany every separate image of any particular saint, they could not hesitate to ascribe the same to every relic of him, even, the cloth or rags that had belonged to him, and the very earth on which he had trod.

A superstitious respect for relics, and especially for the true cross of Christ, is observed to have advanced much in the sixth century ; and many persons then boasted of having in their possession the real wood of that cross. And when image-worship began, that of relics followed, as an accessory. The enshrining of relics (in his zeal for which Julian IV. about the year 620 distinguished himself) made the most excellent sort of images, and they were thought to be the best preservative possible, both for soul and body. No presents were considered as of more value than relics ; and it was an easy thing for the popes to furnish the world plentifully with them, especially after the discovery of the *Catacombs*, which was a subterraneous

\* Burnet on the Articles, p. 295.



place where many of the Romans deposited their dead.

It is observed by historians, that the demand for relics was exceedingly great in the ninth century, and that the clergy employed great dexterity in satisfying that demand. In general, some persons pretended to have been informed in a dream, where such and such relics were to be found, and the next day they never failed to find them. As the most valued relics came from the East, the Greeks made a gainful traffick with the Latins for legs, arms, skulls, jaw-bones, &c. many of them certainly of pagans, and some of them not human; and recourse was sometimes had to violence and theft, in order to gain possession of such valuable treasure\*.

We may form some idea of the value that was put upon some relics in that superstitious and ignorant age from the following circumstance, and this is only one instance of great numbers that might be collected from history. Boleslas, a king of Poland, willing to shew his gratitude to Otho the third emperor of Germany, who had erected his duchy into a kingdom, made him a present of an arm of St. Adalbert in a silver case. The emperor was far from flighting the present, but placed it in a new church which he had built at Rome in honour of this Adalbert. He also built a monument in honour of the same saint †.

The greatest traffic for relics was during the Crusades, and that many impositions were practised in this business, was evident from the very pretensions themselves; the same thing, for example, the skull of the same person being to be seen in different places, and more wood of the true cross of Christ, than, they say, would make a ship. In this the Greeks had the same advantage that the Romans had by means of the Catacombs, which contained a sufficient quantity of bones, to which it was easy to give the names of celebrated christian martyrs, and, at a distance from Rome no inquiry could be made concerning them.

Besides all this, a happy method was thought of by Gregory the first, or some other person of that age, to

\* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 141. † Scur, A. D. 1000.



multiply the virtue of relics, without multiplying the relics themselves: For instead of giving the relic of any saint, he contented himself with putting into a box a piece of cloth which was called *brandeum*, which had only touched the relics. It is said, that in the time of pope Leo, some Greeks having doubted whether such relics as these were of any use; the pope, in order to convince them, took a pair of scissors, and that on cutting one of these cloths, blood came out of it \*.

We cannot wonder at the great demand for relics, when we consider the virtues that were ascribed to them by the priests and friars who were the venders of them in that ignorant age. They pretended that they had power to fortify against temptations, to increase grace and merit, to fright away devils, to still winds and tempests, to secure from thunder, lightning, blasting, and all sudden casualties and misfortunes; to stop all infectious disorders, and to cure as many others as as any mountebank ever pretended to do. Who that had money would choose to be without such powerful preservatives?

The Fathers of the council of Trent appointed relics to be venerated, but, with their usual caution, they did not determine the degree of it. This great abuse was effectually removed in all protestant churches at the reformation, though many other things equally near to the first principles of christianity, were left to the sagacity and zeal of a later period.

Among the catholics the respect for relics still continues, though, with the general decrease of superstition, this must have abated in some measure. The holy land is still a great mart for these commodities. Haselquist says†, that the inhabitants of Bethlehem chiefly live by them, making models of the holy sepulchre, crosses, &c. Of these there was so large a stock in Jerusalem, that the procurator told him he had to the amount of fifteen thousand piastras in the magazine of

\* Basnage Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. i. p. 305.

† Travels, p. 149.



the convent. An incredible quantity of them, he says, goes yearly to the Roman catholic countries in Europe, but most to Spain and Portugal. Many are bought by the Turks, who come yearly for these commodities.

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THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
Corruptions of Christianity.

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PART V.

*The History of Opinions concerning the STATE of the  
DEAD.*

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THE INTRODUCTION.

I THINK that I have sufficiently proved in my *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit*, that, in the scriptures, the state of *death* is represented as a state of absolute insensibility, being opposed to life. The doctrine of the distinction between *soul* and *body*, as two different substances, the one material and the other immaterial, and so independent of one another, that the latter may even die and perish, and the former, instead of losing any thing, be rather a gainer by the catastrophe, was originally a doctrine of the oriental philosophy, which afterwards spread into the western part of the world. But it does not appear that it was ever adopted by the generality of the Jews, and perhaps not even by the more learned and philosophical of them, such as Josephus, till after the time of our



Saviour ; though Philo, and some others, who resided in Egypt, might have adopted that tenet in an earlier period.

Though a distinction is made in the scriptures between the principle, or seat, of thought in man, and the parts which are destined to other functions ; and in the New Testament that principle may sometimes be signified by the term *soul*, yet there is no instance, either in the Old or New Testament, of this soul being supposed to be in one place and the body in another. They are always conceived to go together, so that the perceptive and thinking power could not, in fact, be considered by the sacred writers as any other than a *property* of a living man, and therefore as what ceased of course when the man was dead, and could not be revived but with the revival of the body.

Accordingly, we have no promise of any reward, or any threatening of punishment, after death, but that which is represented as taking place at the general resurrection. And it is observable that this is never, in the scriptures, called, as with us, the resurrection of *the body* (as if the soul, in the mean time, was in some other place) but always the resurrection of *the dead*, that is, of the man. If, therefore, there be any *intermediate state*, in which the soul alone exists, conscious of any thing, there is an absolute silence concerning it in the scriptures ; death being always spoken of there as a state of rest, of silence, and of darkness, a place where *the wicked cease from troubling*, but where the *righteous cannot praise God*.

This is the sum of the argument from the scriptures, and comes in aid of the arguments from reason and the nature of things, which shew the utter incapacity of any connection between substances so totally foreign to each other, as the *material* and *immaterial* principles are always described to be ; things that have no common property whatever, and therefore must be incapable of all mutual action. I think I have shewn that, let the immaterial principle be defined in whatever manner it is possible to define it, the supposition of it explains no one phenomenon in nature ; there being no more conceivable connection between the



powers of thought, and this *immaterial*, than between the same powers, and a *material* principle ; and for any thing that appears, our ignorance concerning the nature of this principle should lead us to suppose that it *may*, just as well as that it *may not*, be compatible with matter.

All that can be said, is, that we can see no *relation* between the principle of sensation and thought, and any system of matter ; but neither do we perceive any relation which matter bears to *gravity*, and various other properties, with which we see that it is, in fact, endued. The same great Being, therefore, that has endued matter with a variety of powers, with which it seems to have no natural connection, may have endued the living human brain with this power of *sensation* and *thought*, though we are not able to perceive *how* this power should result from matter so modified. And since, judging by experience, these powers always *do* accompany a certain state of the brain, and are never found except accompanying that state ; there is just the same reason, why we should say that they necessarily *inhere in*, and *belong to* the brain in that state, as that electricity is the necessary property of glass, and magnetism of the load stone. It is *constant concomitancy*, and nothing else, that is the foundation of our conclusions in both cases alike.

There is not, in fact, any one phenomenon in favour of the opinion of the soul being a separate substance from the body. During life and health, the sentient powers always accompany the body, and in a temporary cessation of thought, as in a swoon, apparent drowning, &c. there never was an instance, in which it was pretended that the soul had been in another place, and came back again when the body was revived. In all these cases, the powers of *sensation* and *thought* are, to all appearance, as much suspended, as those of *breathing* and *moving* ; and we might just as well inquire where the latter had been in the interval of apparent death, as where the former had been at the same time.

There is, indeed, an imperfect mental process going on during sleep ; but this seems to be in proportion to the imperfection of the sleep ; for when it is perfectly sound, and the brain probably completely at rest,



there is no more sensation or thought than during a swoon or apparent drowning. Or, if there had been sufficient evidence of uninterrupted thought during the soundest sleep, still it might be supposed to depend upon the *powers of life*, which were still in the body, and might keep up some motion in the brain.

The only proof of the power of thought not depending upon the body, in this case, would be the soul being afterwards conscious to itself, that it had been in one place, while the body had been in another. Whereas in dreams we never have any idea but that of our whole selves having been in some different place, and in some very different state, from that in which we really are. Upon the whole, therefore, there can be no more reason to think that the *principle of thought* belongs to a substance distinct from the body, than that the *principle of breathing* and of *moving* belongs to another distinct substance, or than that the principle of sound in a bell belongs to a substance distinct from the bell itself, and that it is not a *power* or *property*, depending upon the state into which the parts of it are occasionally put.

How men came to imagine that the case was otherwise, is not easy to say, any more than how they came to imagine that the sun, moon, and stars were animated, and the proper objects of adoration. But when once, in consequence of any train of thinking, they could suppose that the effects of the heavenly bodies, and of the other inanimate parts of nature, were owing to invisible powers residing in them, or to something that was not the object of their external senses, they might easily imagine man to have a principle of a similar kind; and then it was easy enough to advance one step farther, and to suppose that this invisible principle, was a thing independent of the body, and might subsist when that was laid in the grave.

It was a long time, however, before men got quite clear of the idea of the necessary connection between the corporeal and the spiritual part of man. For it was long imagined that this invisible part of man accompanied the body in the place of its interment, whence came the idea of the *descent of the soul*, shade, or ghost, into some subterraneous place; though afterwards, by



attending to the subject, and refining upon it, philosophers began to think that this invisible part of man, having nothing gross or heavy in its composition, might *ascend* rather than *descend*, and so hover in some higher region of the atmosphere. And christians, having an idea of a *local heaven*, somewhere above the clouds, and of God and Christ, residing there, they came in time to think that the souls of good men, and especially of martyrs, might be taken up thither, or into some place adjoining to it, and where they might remain till the resurrection.

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## SECTION I.

*Of the Opinions concerning the Dead till the Time of Austin.*

IN the second and third centuries, those who believed that there was a soul distinct from the body supposed that after death it went to some place under ground; but as this is not the doctrine of the scriptures, it could not have been the general opinion of christians at the first; and how long they kept to the genuine doctrine of revelation, and the dictates of reason and common sense, in this respect, cannot be determined. It appears, however, that there were some christians who did so, and that in Arabia this doctrine was held by some so late as the third century. For we are informed that they maintained that the soul perishes with the body, but that it will be raised to life again, by the power of God, at the resurrection. It is said, however, that they were induced to abandon this opinion by the arguments and influence of Origen\*.

It was in Arabia also, that we find the opinion of Christ having no proper divinity of his own but only that of the Father residing in him, and that he had no existence at all before his appearance in this world.

\* Eusebii Hist. lib. vi. cap. xxxvii, vol. i. p. 299.



This opinion is likewise said to have been confuted by Origen \*. Dupin says, that Tatian also held the opinion of the Arabians with respect to the soul †.

It is to be regretted that we have no farther accounts concerning these christians. Ecclesiastical historians call them *philosophers*; but the system which they held was fundamentally different from that of any other philosophy in those times. It cannot, however, be supposed that this opinion was peculiar to these people. The Jewish christians, at least, must have retained it, and probably as long as they continued to subsist. But we have no distinct account of their opinions or of any thing relating to them. They were not writers themselves, and those that were had little intercourse with them, or value for them.

Whenever the Jews received the opinion of the separate existence of the soul, it was in the imperfect state above-mentioned. For they held that there was a place below the earth, which they called *paradise*, where the souls of good men remained; and they distinguished this from the *upper paradise*, where they were to be after the resurrection. The christians borrowed their opinion from the Jews, and supposed that *Hades*, or the place of souls, was divided into two mansions, in one of which the wicked were in grief and torment, and in the other the godly were in joy and happiness, both of them expecting the general resurrection ‡.

Into this general receptacle of souls, it was the opinion of the early Fathers, that Christ descended, to preach; they supposing these to be the *spirits in prison* mentioned by the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. iii. 19. And as it is said in the gospel that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, some of them supposed either that he did not give much attention to the good, or that they did not attend to him; for they say that, whereas he brought away many of the wicked, he left those of the good where they were. But perhaps the original tradition was, that in consequence of converting them, he removed them from the place

\* Ibid. cap. xxxiii. p. 297. † Bibliotheca Patrum. vol. i. p. 55.

‡ History of the Apostles Creed, p. 198, &c.



where the wicked were confined, to this subterraneous paradise, where the souls of the righteous remain, in joyful expectation of a happy resurrection. Others, however, thought that our Saviour preached so effectually, as to empty the whole of this *limbus patrum* (for so also they called the precincts within which these ancient patriarchs were confined) and carried all the souls with him into heaven\*. But this must have been a late opinion, because it was not supposed in the time of the Fathers, that the souls of good men in general would be with Christ, and enjoy what was then called *the beatific vision of God*, till the resurrection.

This opinion is clearly stated by Novatian, for he says, "Nor are the regions below the earth void of powers (*potestatibus*) regularly disposed and arranged; for there is a place whither the souls of the righteous and of the wicked are led, expecting the sentence of a future judgment †." This was evidently the uniform opinion of christian writers for many centuries after this time.

The article concerning the *descent of Christ into hell*, in what we call the *apostles creed*, is not mentioned by any writer before Ruffinus, who found it in his own church at Aquileia; but it was not then known at Rome, or in the East. At first also, the expression was (*καταχθονια*) but in the creed of Athanasius, made in the sixth or seventh century, it was changed into Hades. But even then, it seems to have been put for *burial*, there being no other word expressing the burial of Christ in that creed ‡. But in the declension of the Greek, and chiefly in the Latin tongue, the term *hades*, or *hell*, began to be applied to the mansion of wicked souls; some of the Fathers imagining *hades* to be in the centre of the earth, others under the earth, and some being uncertain about its situation.

The high opinion that soon began to be entertained of the heroism and merits of the martyrs, led christians to suppose that a preference would be given to their souls after death. For while the souls of ordinary christians were to wait their doom in some intermedi-

\* Burnet on the Articles, p. 71. † De Trinitate, cap. i. p. 68.

‡ Burnet on the Articles, p. 69.



ate state, or to pass to their final bliss through a purgation of fire, it came to be the general belief that martyrs were admitted to the immediate presence of God, and of Christ, the fire of martyrdom having purged away all their sins at once.

It was the opinion of most of the early Fathers that the world was to be destroyed by fire, and also that all men were to pass through this fire, that the good would be purified by it, and the wicked consumed. The former part of this doctrine they might learn from the apostle Peter; but it does not clearly appear whence they derived the latter part of it. It is evident, however, that they had no proper idea of the eternity of hell torments. And it was the opinion of Origen, and after him of Gregory Nazianzen, and probably of others of the Fathers, that the wicked, after being thus punished according to their deserts, would come out purified, and obtain mercy \*. Ambrose thought that the wicked would remain in this fire, which was to consume the world, but how long does not appear †. Hilary maintained, that after the day of judgment all must pass through the fire, even the virgin Mary herself, in order to purify them from their sins. This opinion was the first idea of a doctrine of *Purgatory*, which was so great a source of gain to the monks and priests in after-ages.

Austin speaks very doubtfully with respect to the dead. He sometimes seems very positive for *two states* only; but as he asserted the last probatory fire, so he seems to have thought that good souls might suffer from grief in their sequestered state before the last day, on account of some of their past sins, and that they might rise to their proper consummation by degrees. See his sentiments on this subject pretty much at large in his *first question to Dulcidius* ‡; where he inclines to think that they who have faith in Christ, but love the world too much, will be saved *but so as by fire*; whereas they who, though they profess faith in Christ, yet neglect good works, will suffer eternally. In his treatise *De Civitate Dei* §, he does not seem disposed

\* Suet. A. D. 389. † Ib. A. D. 397. ‡ Opera, vol. iv. p. 658.  
§ Lib. xxi. cap. 18.



to controvert the opinion of those who say that all would be saved at last, through the intercession of the saints.

The Gnostics are said to have maintained that the greatest part of mankind would be *annihilated* at the day of judgment, which was probably the same thing that was meant by those who said that they would be *consumed* in the fire that was to destroy the world.

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## SECTION II.

*Of the Opinions concerning the State of the Dead, from the Time of Austin till the Reformation.*

IN the last period we have seen something like the doctrine of *Purgatory*, but it is so exceedingly unlike the present doctrine of the church of Rome on that subject, that we can hardly imagine that it could ever serve as a foundation for it. The ancient Fathers only thought that when this world would be destroyed by fire, that fire would purify the good, and destroy the wicked. Whereas, this purgatory is something that is supposed to take place immediately after death, to affect the soul only, and to terminate sooner or later, according to circumstances, especially the pains that are taken in favour of the dead, by the masses and other good offices of the living, as well as by their own benefactions and bequests for religious uses before their death.

On the whole, therefore, it looks as if this doctrine of purgatory had been built upon some other ground; and nothing is so likely to furnish a ground work for it, as the notions of the heathens concerning the state of souls in the regions below, which were always supposed capable of being brought back again. Also the popular opinions of the northern nations concerning the state of souls after death were, in many cases, simi-



lar to those of the Greeks and Romans; and such opinions as these would not easily quit their hold of the common people on their conversion to christianity; and being held together with the opinion of the Fathers above-mentioned, the present doctrine of purgatory might, in time, be the produce of both.

It is generally said that the foundation of the present doctrine was laid by Gregory the Great, who lived in the sixth century, about 160 years after Austin. But his opinions on the subject were very little different from those of Austin himself, and of others before him, of which an account has been given in the former period. Gregory, however, did suppose that there was a purgatory to expiate the slight offences of which very good men might be guilty; but he does not say that this punishment would always be by means of fire, nor did he suppose this expiation to be made in the same place, but sometimes in the air, and sometimes in sinks, &c. or places full of filth and nastiness. He also speaks of some good men whose souls went immediately to heaven. But in one way he certainly did greatly promote the doctrine, viz. by the many idle stories which he propagated about what happened to particular souls after they had left their bodies, as concerning the soul of king Theodoric, which was boiled in the pot of Vulcan \*.

Narrow, however, as these foundations were, the monks were very industrious in building upon them; finding it the most profitable business they were ever engaged in; and about the tenth century the present system seems to have been pretty well completed. For then not even the best of men were supposed to be exempted from the fire of purgatory; and it was generally represented as not less severe than that of hell itself. But then souls might always be delivered from it by the prayers and masses of the living, which prayers and masses might always be had upon certain pecuniary considerations; and the fables and fictitious miracles that were propagated to secure the

\* Sæur, A. D. 594.



belief of this new kind of future state, were innumerable.

Thomas Aquinas says that the place of purgatory is near to that in which the damned are punished, that the pains of purgatory exceed all the pains of this life, that souls are not punished by dæmons but by divine justice only, though angels or dæmons might conduct them to the place. By the pains of purgatory, he says, venial sins are expiated even *quoad culpam*, or from the guilt of them, and that some are delivered sooner than others. \*

The present doctrine of the church of Rome on the subject of purgatory is, that every man is liable both to temporal and eternal punishment for his sins; that God, on account of the death and intercession of Christ, does indeed pardon sin as to its eternal punishment; but that the sinner is still liable to temporal punishment, which he must expiate by acts of penance and sorrow in this world, together with such other sufferings as God shall think fit to lay upon him †. But if he does not expiate these in his life, there is a state of sufferings and misery in the next world, where the soul is to bear the temporal punishment of its sin, which may continue longer or shorter till the day of judgment; and to the shortening of this punishment, prayers and works of supererogation here on earth, or the intercessions of the saints in heaven, but above all things, the sacrifice of the mass, are of great efficacy. This is the doctrine of the church of Rome, as asserted in the councils of Florence, and of Trent ‡.

Before this time, the opinions concerning purgatory were exceedingly various, with respect to the place of purgatory, the nature of the pains of it, and indeed every thing belonging of it. Eckius maintained that it was in the bottom of the sea. Others would have it to be in mount Etna, Vesuvius, or some other burning mountain. Sir Thomas Moore says, that the punishment will be only by fire, but Fisher his fellow

\* Summa, vol. iii. p. 446, &c.

† Petrarch says, I pray God every day to make my purgatory in this world. *Memoires pour la vie de Petrarch*, vol. iii. p. 277.

‡ Burnet on the Articles, p. 269.



sufferer, by fire and by water. Lorchius says neither by fire nor water, but by the violent convulsions of hope and fear. Fisher maintained that the executioners would be the holy angels, but Sir Thomas Moore thought they would be the devils. Some again thought that only *venial* sins are expiated in purgatory, but others that *mortal* sins are expiated there likewise. Dennis the Carthusian, thought that the pains of purgatory would continue to the end of the world, but Dominicus a Soto limited it to ten years, and others made the time to depend on the number of masses, &c. that should be said on their behalf, or on the will of the pope. Thomas Aquinas, as has been seen above, makes the pains of purgatory to be as violent as those of hell; whereas, the Rhemists say that souls are not in a bad condition there, and Durandus, holding a middle opinion gives them some intermission from their pains on Sundays and holidays. Bede tells a long story of a Northumberland man, who after he died returned to life again, and said that he had passed through the middle of a long and large valley, which had two lakes in it, in one of which souls were tormented with heat, and in the other with cold; and that when a soul had been so long in the hot lake that it could endure no longer, it would leap into the cold one; and when that became intolerable, it would leap back again. This uncertainty was so great, that the whole doctrine must have been discredited, if it had not been for the profits which the popes, the priests, and the friars, made of it\*.

The living being, by means of this doctrine of purgatory, deeply interested in the fate of the dead, and having them very much at their mercy, the mistaken compassion and piety of many persons, could not fail to be excited in their favour. Before the tenth century, it had been customary in many places, to put up prayers on certain days for the souls that were confined in purgatory, but these were made by each religious society for its own members and friends; but in this century a festival was instituted by Odilo bishop of Clugny, in remembrance of *all departed souls*, and it was added

\* Stavely's Romish Horseleach, p. 205.



to the Latin calendar towards the conclusion of the century \*.

The Greeks, though in most respects they had superstitions similar to those of the Latins, yet they never adopted their notions concerning purgatory. At the time that this opinion was formed in the West, the two churches had very little intercourse with each other; and besides, the Greeks were so alienated from the Latins, that the reception of it by the latter would have rendered the former more averse to it.

According to the doctrine of purgatory, the moment that any soul is released from that place, it is admitted into heaven, to the presence of God and of Christ, and made as happy as it can be in an unembodied state, which was contrary to the opinion of the early Fathers, viz. that all souls continued in *hades*, until the resurrection, or at most that an exception was made in favour of the martyrs. However this doctrine of purgatory, and the opinion of the efficacy of prayers, and of masses, to procure complete happiness for those who were exposed to it at length obliterated the ancient doctrine, as appeared when an attempt was made to revive something like it by pope John XXII.

Towards the conclusion of his life, this pope incurred the disapprobation of the whole catholic church, by asserting in some public discourses, that the souls of the faithful in their intermediate state, were permitted to behold Christ as a man, but not as God. This doctrine particularly offended Philip VI. king of France, who caused it to be examined and condemned by the divines of Paris in 1333. The pope being alarmed at this opposition, softened his opinion in the year following, by saying that the unembodied souls of the righteous behold the divine essence as far as their separate state and condition will admit; and for fear of any ill consequences from dying under the imputation of heresy, when he lay upon his death bed, he submitted his opinion to the judgment of the church. His successor Benedict XII. after much controversy, established the present doctrine, viz. that the souls of the blessed, dur-

\* Mosheim, vol. x. 223.



ing their immediate state, do fully and perfectly contemplate the divine nature \*.

It may just deserve to be mentioned, at the close of this period, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the same body, was questioned by Canon bishop of Tarsus, in the sixth century; who, in opposition to Philoponus a philosopher of Alexandria (who had asserted that both the form and the matter of the body would be restored at the resurrection) maintained that the *form* would remain, but that the *matter* would be changed †.

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### SECTION III.

*Of the Revival of the genuine Doctrine of Revelation concerning the State of the Dead.*

So general was the belief of a purgatory in this western part of the world, that Wickliffe could not entirely shake it off. But though he believed in a purgatory, he saw the absurdity of supposing that God had entrusted any man with power to relieve sinners from such a state; though whether the souls of the dead might not be profited by the prayers of the living, he seems to have been in doubt ‡.

The ancient Waldenses, however, who separated from the church of Rome before the doctrine of purgatory had got established, never admitted it; and presently after the reformation by Luther, we find it abandoned by all who left the church of Rome without exception, so that this doctrine is now peculiar to that church.

The doctrine of a *soul*, however, and of its existence in a separate conscious state, from the time of death to that of the resurrection, which was the foundation of the doctrine of purgatory, and of many other abuses

\* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 158.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 473.

‡ Gilpin's Life of him, p. 70.



of popery, was still retained by most. But Mosheim mentions some anabaptists who held that the soul sleeps till the resurrection \*; and the Helvetic confession condemns all those who believed the sleep of the soul †, which shews that a considerable number must have maintained it. Luther himself was of this opinion; though whether he died in it has been doubted. It was, however, the firm belief of so many of the reformers of that age, that had it not been for the authority of Calvin, who wrote expressly against it, the doctrine of an *intermediate conscious state* would, in all probability, have been as effectually exploded as the doctrine of purgatory itself.

Several persons in this country have, in every period since the reformation, appeared in favour of *the sleep of the soul*, and it always had a considerable number of followers. Of late this opinion has gained ground very much, especially since the writings of the present excellent bishop of Carlisle, and of archdeacon Blackburne on the subject. But I think the doctrine of an intermediate state can never be effectually extirpated, so long as the belief of a separate soul is retained. For while that is supposed to exist independently of the body, it will not be easily imagined to sleep along with it, but will be thought to enjoy more or less of a consciousness of its existence.

But when, agreeably to the dictates of reason, as well as the testimony of scripture rightly understood, we shall acquiesce in the opinion that man is an *homogeneous being*, and that the powers of sensation and thought belong to the brain, as much as gravity and magnetism belong to other arrangements of matter, the whole fabric of superstition, which had been built upon the doctrine of a soul and of its separate conscious state must fall at once. And this persuasion will give a value to the gospel which it could not have before, as it will be found to supply the only satisfactory evidence of a future life. For though a future state of retribution might appear sufficiently consonant to some appearances in nature, yet when the means of it, or the only method by which it could be brought about (viz. that of the resurrection of the

\* Vol. iv. p. 163.

† Syntagma, p. 10.



very body that had putrified in the grave, or had been reduced to ashes) were so little visible (since, to all appearance, men die exactly like plants and brute animals, and no analogy drawn from *them*, can lead us to expect a revival) we must eagerly embrace that gospel, in which alone this important truth is clearly brought to light. It is in the gospel alone that we have an express assurance of a future life, by a person fully authorized to give it, exemplified also in his own person; he having been actually put to death, and raised to life again, for the purpose of giving us that assurance.

To give this value to revelation, by proving the proper and complete *mortality of man*, on the principles of reason and scripture, is the object of my *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit*, to which, and also to what I have added in support of it, in my discussion of the subject with Dr. Price, I beg leave to refer my readers.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.







## *Ecclesiastical History.*

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